Our Father

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3-5-7-8.

OUR FATHER

Lectures

BY

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Translated from the Norwegian by Knut Seehuus

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.
AUGSBURG PUBLISHING HOUSE
1918

LUTHERAN PUBLISHING HOUSE, PRINTERS AND BINDERS,
DECORAH, IOWA.

THESE lectures, like the ones entitled "Our Homes and Our Children" and "Youth and Christianity," previously published, were delivered at "Fredly" (Shelter of Peace), a school for Christian youths near Trondhjem, Norway. The reception accorded the first two books has encouraged me to give this series also to the press. My most sincere wish is that they might be of benefit to some young people, possibly to both young and old.

I have in these lectures included some things about which I expect to hear: "This is not for youth." When I, however, have taken these along, the explanation will be found in a reason which I have occasionally given to my audiences: "This I do not say in order to frighten you, but in order to *warn* you and, if possible, *arm* you against things that must come."

O. K.

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I.

Our Father Who Art in Heaven.

1. A Safe Harbor, a Mighty Fortress.

"The stirring and eventful times we now have experienced ought to kindle an urgent desire in every Christian for an ardent 'Our Father.'"

Thus wrote the noted Swedish evangelist, C. O. Rosenius, a little more than half a century ago. What, then, shall we say?

Well, in the first place, we must say that every Christian, self-evidently during all changes wrought by time, must feel an urgent need for praying "Our Father"; there is a very dangerous defect in our faith if we do not feel thus. And there is no doubt but that Rosenius is of the same opinion.

But then we must certainly say also, that were the times about the middle of the last century stirring and eventful, they are much more so at present.

The social, political, and ecclesiastical realms are in a state of fermentation and turbulence. Powerful forces clash, the seas run high, and many a devout Christian anxiously asks: What will become of the Lord's church in such turbulent waters?

Or, what is to become of the Lord's people when the mighty ones of this world go forth to battle?

Be still, my soul, I know of a safe harbor and a secure fortress, it is the prayer "Our Father." There we may enter and seek rest and receive strength, and our faith, comfort, and peace; our joy, courage, and confidence shall be renewed from day to day.

2. Fatherless.

In my early childhood I once heard a simple little song about a poor boy who told that he was without a home, that his mother was dead, and that he had never known his father. The song was not classical poetry, nor was the tune classical music, — it was but a commonplace street-ballad; but at the measure, "My father I have never known," we children shed tears. And do we not feel as though our hearts would

cry out within us, even now, when we think of such a poor waif, who never has known his father? And, alas, there are so many of them, both in town and country.

Fatherless! — what a sum total of sorrow, want, and misery that word does express!

But is not every child of Adam, the entire human race, fatherless so long as God is not known as revealed through Jesus Christ?

No fire worshiper, Brahmin, or Mohammedan ever conceived the idea of addressing himself to God in prayer as a child to a father; no, not even among the Israelites do we find this.

Indeed, the most pious of the Lord's people in the time of the old covenant have spoken glorious and beautiful words of the loving-kindness of the Lord toward his people. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103, 13).

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, saith the Lord" (Isa. 66, 13).

"Can a woman forget her suckling child, . . . yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. 49, 15).

But the Lord's Prayer, that we have, even these men of God had not, nor could they have it. Neither Moses nor Elijah, Isaiah nor Daniel, no, not even John the Baptist could arise among

his brethren and say: "When ye pray then shall ye say, Our Father, who art in heaven."

Such language He only could use who was privileged to utter words like the following: "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father" (John 10, 15).

"I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 14, 10).

"Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11, 27).

"He that blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us . . . nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2, 14).

"He that consecrated a new and living way through the veil for us" (Hebr. 10, 20), an open way even into the heart of the Father, — he only could so address God.

3. Father.

Let us try to conceive of the sum of love, care, and kindness comprised in the names father and mother. You may, perhaps, have heard of the mother who, in spite of all warnings, rushed through the flames into the burning house, in order to save her child; of how

she found the child and brought it out unhurt, while she herself was nearly consumed by the flames, and suffered for the rest of her life from the injury she had received.

Perhaps you have also heard of the mother who had lost her way on the heath during a raging blizzard, and was found frozen to death the next day, while the child lay safe and sound, tucked snugly in the clothes of the mother.

"I remember it as though it had happened only yesterday," said an old man, relating the following incident: "We had a severe winter on the toilsome, frostbound little farm that was the home of father and mother and their six children; doubly severe, because the previous year had been one of early frost. There was but little food for so many mouths, and, no doubt, the food was also of poor quality, although I cannot remember that I ever thought of this at the time, as I was not finical nor particular, but ate what I got and had no thought for the morrow. Again and again, as we sat down to eat, mother used to say: 'Now you just eat; I have scraped the pot, and do not wish for any more.' O thou wonderful mother-heart! That mother denied herself many a

meal, so there should not be too little left for us, I did not at that time understand, but later on I understood. But there is one instance from that severe winter which I remember more vividly than anything else, — the moment when mother said to father: 'Now I am just about losing courage,' or, as she expressed it: 'Now I am about despairing.' The answer by which father tried to console her I cannot recall, possibly because I did not fully understand it. I had but a faint idea of the anxiety and pain that caused such a sigh of despair from our gentle mother. But even at this time, even now in my old age, it cuts me to the quick to think of what that precious soul must have suffered for our sakes. Such, however, is the heart of a mother."

Another instance told by the same person: "We are on our way to the chalet far up in the mountains, father, mother, and two of the little ones, four and six years old. Rain has fallen, and the rivulets that we in summer could pass over dryshod by jumping from one stone to another now run white and foaming, roaring over rapids that no child can ford, and not a trace is there of bridges. But father bends his back, I crawl up and twine my arms around

his neck, and over we go. Now the water may roar all it pleases, father's foot treads carefully, he steadies himself with his chalet-staff, and walks along steadily and securely with his burden. But, if he should slip, if he should fall! Oh, yes, I may think so now, but it never entered the mind of the *child* that *father* could fall. I felt so perfectly safe sitting on father's broad, strong back."

So much for the old man's story.

But let us now think of Him who shaped the hearts of father and mother — yes, and the child's heart also.

The Lord God in heaven formed the father-heart and the mother-heart, with their infinite love that willingly faces death in the flames or in the snow of an icy winter night, when it's a question of saving the child; the heart that gladly robs itself so the child may rest snugly and securely; that suffers privation, starves and endures, so the child shall want nothing — God formed these hearts; hence he must have just such a heart himself; for that which is created cannot be better than its creator. "He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" He that formed the father's and the mother's hearts shall he not have a heart? And the Lord God

in heaven invites us through his Son, the faithful witness, to come to him as to our Father, because he wishes to shower the infinite love of his father-heart upon us, so that we may enjoy it, even as the child enjoys the love of its father and mother every moment of its life.

Furthermore: The Lord God in heaven shaped the heart of the child, — the heart with a boundless confidence in father and mother; its touching certainty that father and mother can and will give it all that which is good, and protect and shield it from all that is evil and harmful.

And when God offers us a child's place and a child's relation, it is self-evident that he has intended us to be like the small, helpless child; the child that is yet too small to have any thoughts as to whether father and mother have food enough for the many mouths, too small to think of any danger when it is carried on father's strong back.

When I thus think of father and mother, and when I think of the little child's place with father and mother, then I begin to get somewhat of an idea of the riches of divine love, the love that finds a true expression in these words: God will be a father to me, and I am

to have a child's place and a child's rights with him.

And when I hear my Savior, after having, through his death and resurrection, opened a way for us to the heart of the Father, speak these extraordinary words: I go to *my* Father, and *your* Father, then this child-relation to God becomes a thing so wonderfully great, rich, and glorious, that it staggers all thought; there is room for nothing but praise, thanksgiving, and adoration, because *I* shall be permitted to call *Him* my Father; call the Father of Christ Jesus *my* Father!

Permitted to call God my Father? Yes, dear soul, yes, and a thousand times yes; certainly you are permitted to do so, thou disciple of Christ Jesus. And why not, when the only-begotten Son of the Father tells you: When ye pray, ye shall say, Our Father!

Why not, when the Son by his blood, death, and resurrection has acquired the rights of children for us, and designated us as his brethren and sisters by saying, *my* Father and *your* Father?

And when the Father himself, through holy baptism, has adopted you and claimed you as his child. With such evidence at hand, can you

ever doubt that you are permitted to call him Father?

There is only one thing you are not permitted to do: to neglect the opportunity of receiving such signal grace. You are not allowed to reject such an offer, nor to turn away from such a God in unbelief and infidelity.

Oh, come, then, surrender to his infinite love, and consider it your greatest joy, happiness, and honor here below that you have the privilege of addressing the Lord God in heaven as Father, dear Father!

4. Our Father.

You are taught to say, *Our* Father. This means that you may include in your prayer all who are near and dear to you.

Have you seen a mother at the moment when some one who has saved her child enters her house with the child in his arms, surrendering it to her caresses, saying: Here is your child; it was near drowning — near being run over — or was lost in the woods, where beasts of prey seek their quarry.

If so, you would be tempted to envy that man, when you behold the overwhelming joy

of the mother and the gratitude that she lavishes on him.

Just so God, our Father, rejoices that you carry his children home to him on the arms of faith, placing them in his bosom. You may bring each separate one to him and say: Our Father, my brother, sister, friend, is in danger; now I place him (her) in thy arms — help thou, dear Father, help in the way necessary!

Or thus: My father (my mother) is sick, despondent, suffering; I bring him (her) to thee, and deliver him (her) into thy care; heal, comfort, succor thou, as thou alone knowest how, thou, Our Father!

And father and mother may say: " Our Father, take in thy powerful hand the child on the beach now playing," playing in a world full of dangers; "deep is the water, the bottom unsafe"; let not my child slip, fall, or drown; "send thy Spirit with guiding wand," that he may give light in the heart, light on the road, and strength to conquer in the hour of temptation; behold, I place my son (my daughter) in thine arms; thou art our Father, and hast even more than a father's and mother's love also for my child!

And you may carry the many, an entire

multitude, to him in prayer, saying: Our Father, here we come to thee from the east, the west, from north and south, from the entire wide, wide world; there are so many of us, but thou knowest us all, and thy heart is big enough for all of us; for the rich and the poor, the sick and the well; the strong and the weak; the learned and the unlearned; the great and the small; — give us a home with thee, for thou art our Father. Let thine eye in mercy rest upon each and every one of us, that we, as obedient children and loving brothers and sisters, may honor thy name, advance thy kingdom, perform thy will so that the entire earth may resound with thy praise!

5. Who Art in Heaven.

"My father is in town to-day," says the little farmer girl, and she feels so happy, because of something fine that father will bring home for her, "he comes *from town,* doesn't he?"

But then, if some other little one can say: My father is in the capital — or abroad, in London, Paris, Rome, Palestine; dear me, what expectations the little one has!

And, indeed, there's a reason, because this latter one's father will certainly be able to bring his child grander gifts than the ordinary farmer who has made a flying trip to the nearest village.

If you were a child, and had a rich, kind father, who might be expected to return to-morrow from London, or Paris, you certainly would shout with joy in anticipation of all the fine things he might bring home for you.

How should not we, then, rejoice, you and I, who have a Father in heaven?

It is clearly evident that Jesus has intended to call our special attention to just this part of the petition, the phrase: "Who art in heaven." The familiar passages in Matt. 7, 11 and Luke 11, 13 prove this: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things . . . give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him?"

For what does it really mean to have a Father in heaven? It certainly means a great deal more than to have a father in London, Paris, or Rome; more than to have the greatest, the richest, the wisest and best father on earth.

A Father in heaven! This means a father

whose goodness, and love, and power, and riches no one can presume to measure, even as no one can measure the vault of heaven.

Now, I do not mean that you should think of everything I have mentioned here while you pray the Lord's Prayer (yet your entire mind must be set on the praying); but I would encourage you to reflect as often as possible on the fulness of love and goodness conveyed by the word Father, and what a source of comfort, joy, courage, and strength has been given to us just in this fact, that we may come to our Lord God with our prayers, and call him Our Father who art in heaven!

If these few thoughts might help you but ever so little to grow really fond of the Lord's Prayer, yes, fonder and fonder of it from day to day, I should indeed rejoice.

God grant us, then, that we, in the words of Dr. Luther, "may ask our Father with all boldness and confidence, as children ask their dear father for something." Amen.

II.

Hallowed Be Thy Name.

1. Jesus and the First Petition.

"Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." These are the first words of the great high-priestly prayer of Jesus (John 17, 1), "the greatest of all the great texts of the Bible, the most exalted words spoken on earth" (Prof. Caspari), the text that Philip Spener never dared to preach on, because he thought himself utterly unworthy of it.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name!" Thus prays our Savior, standing at the threshold of his last great passion (John 12, 27. 28). This is as though he were to say: No matter what happens to me and mine, if only thou, Father, may be glorified; if only thy name may be honored, worshiped, exalted, and praised by ransomed sin-

ners, as mankind learns to know thy infinite love and grace.

But, because this could come to pass only when the work of redemption had been completed in the victory over sin, death, and the devil, he prays (John 17, 1): "Father, glorify thy Son"; that is, let it succeed now, that work of redemption which we agreed on while I was with thee; strengthen me now for the fight against all the enemies of the salvation of the children of Adam, that I may be crowned with victory, and enter into the glory I had with thee before the foundation of the world, and all this only that thou, Father, may be glorified by it.

Such was Jesus. As it was his meat to do the will of the Father, so it was also his greatest desire, his bliss, to glorify the Father. Such was his piety, his fear of God.

But what he was we should become, we that believe on him.

2. We and the First Petition. I.

Christ was the Son of God, but, at the same time, true man, the same as we, "yet without sin" (Heb. 4, 15). He was true man; hence, what he was we should become through the

power of his redemption. "That God in all things might be glorified" was what the apostle Peter had most at heart (1 Pet. 4, 11). And this must and will we also have most at heart when the image of Christ becomes implanted and makes growth in us, so that the mind of Jesus becomes our mind. This is the true godliness that God will work in *us,* as many as through faith in Jesus are grafted into him; so that we receive love of his love, a hallowed mind from his hallowed mind, just as every living branch receives sap from the vine it is grafted into.

And then it must be evident that among all the petitions the children of God feel the need of making, "Our Father, hallowed be thy name" will always rank first with us, as with Jesus.

Oh, what a judgment does not this petition pass on all who think themselves "just about sufficiently religious" when they observe the established customs of an outwardly blameless life, not being guilty of murder, adultery, or theft, and "strive to give every one his due," etc. — but who otherwise diligently transgress all other commandments of the law of God, in desire, word, and deed; especially, perhaps, the second commandment concerning the name of God.

To take the name of God, the Father, and the name of Jesus Christ in vain, to dishonor these names by cursing and swearing in daily conversation, is regarded as nothing out of the way; "one means nothing wicked by it." Just think of it! to disregard the name of God by using it as a by-word is regarded as no sin, "one means nothing by it!"

But to mention the name of the Holy One; the name of God, the Father, the name of Christ Jesus, the name so dear and glorious to prophets, apostles, and to all the saints, that they willingly gave their life-blood for that name, the name which all the holy angels and all the redeemed saints in heaven exalt in sacred reverence and blissful adoration — to mention such a name without "meaning anything by it," is not this downright blasphemy and godlessness? Is not even God himself anything to such a person?

And is it not the most arrant guile of the sworn enemy of God and man that he so hoodwinks and perverts understanding and heart, that this is regarded as no sin at all? There is no doubt whatever but that the enemy of our salvation fully knows, that whenever the time comes that the name of God instills reverence

in men's hearts, he is in danger of losing his power over them.

And how many realize that they commit a sin, when they neglect to praise God in sincere gratitude for his infinite grace and loving-kindness, for his righteousness and mercy, to praise him as creator, ruler, and protector, as redeemer, as comforter in life and death?

And, again, who realizes that he commits a sin when he neglects to make use of the salvation bought with such a price — the salvation God freely offers through the means of grace, word, and sacrament, when he makes no use of such gifts in order to gain spiritual health and strength to live his life in the obedience of love toward God, to the praise and glory of his name? For such health and strength the salvation in Christ has power to give us. To slight such salvation is regarded as no sin; "to give every one his dues, to treat all squarely" — and often hardly even this — must certainly be sufficient; then both God and man ought to be satisfied — oh, but is not this sheer godlessness?

To those so minded we must say: "If you were to pray the Lord's Prayer — if you, who regard the name of God as of no significance, and care not a particle whether God be revered

or not, if you — because 'one must be a little devout sometimes' — were to pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!' why, it would be nothing short of offering a direct insult to the Holy One."

But then you certainly have cause to ask: "What am I, poor worm, to do? If even the best thing I know of — to repeat the Lord's Prayer — becomes but an increase of my guilt and sin, whither, then, shall I fly?"

The answer is, that you must get a change of heart, you must be renewed from within, be "born again," as our Savior puts it. Learn to know thine own deep-rooted evil, — that thy heart in selfishness and unbelief has forsaken God. Come to the throne of grace; come with the publican's prayer: "God, be merciful unto me, a sinner!" Praying in this manner to Him who receives sinners, and justifies the godless who wish to leave the way of wickedness, your sins will be forgiven for the sake of Christ's blood, and you will be permitted to believe in the full forgiveness of sins, and will love much, because much has been forgiven you.

3. We and the First Petition. II.

We who have, through faith in Jesus, become the children of God; we who find the peace and comfort of our hearts in confessing that "the Holy Ghost richly and daily forgives me and all believers all our sins," what use do we, my friends, really make of the first petition?

What do we, as a rule, have most at heart when we approach God in prayer? Is it the first great petition of Jesus: "Father, glorify thy name"? Is it a desire for the furtherance of the cause of God, or is it merely a solicitation of gifts and benefits for ourselves which ranks first in our minds?

Alas, were He who sees and knows everything to tell us just what we are, do you not think his verdict would be something like this: "Oh, I know you; you think most of yourselves, and of how you may obtain everything you need, in order to be snugly comfortable. You do, indeed, desire my gifts, and like to enjoy my blessings, but you think very little of glorifying me by living your lives for me. You are little concerned about making use of my gifts and turning them into strength for a holy life in works of charity."

Let each and every one of us ask himself: "What is foremost in my confession of sin? Is it a lamentation on the suffering brought upon us because we have sinned, or is it a true confession of the great wrong we have done; an unbosoming of our guilt in having offended God and dishonored his name?"

And what do we, then, expect the time we spend in prayer to yield us? Is it chiefly that our consciences may be set at rest? Or what do you wish the result of your prayer-meetings, your church attendance, your presence at the Lord's table to be? Is it that your peace of heart, your joy in the Lord may be renewed by increased certainty of forgiveness of sins — this, and nothing else?

Or, do you pray through it all to receive increased strength to glorify the Father and the Son by a holy life in the obedience of love, according to God's commandments? Do you not only pray "to be plucked as a brand from out of the fire," but do you also ask perfect salvation for yourself and your dear ones; salvation for your friends and your enemies; for Jews and gentiles; aye, for all mankind, because of your compassion on your fellow men, and for the sake of the glory of the Lord?

Do you pray first, last, and always for the victory of the Lord's cause; that all the generations on earth may bow beneath the sceptre of his salvation and do homage to him as the king of glory; that all nations may rejoice before him from sunrise to sunset, and the entire earth be filled with his praise?

If you do, then you are praying in the spirit of Christ Jesus. Then the First Petition has become also *your* very first petition.

This is the object of that growth and development of your life of faith, which the Lord will help you to attain if you remain faithful. Still we cannot expect that you, my young friends, who have just commenced the course, shall have become perfect already at this stage.

Do not, therefore, misunderstand me. Indeed, you surely acknowledge that your sins are the cause of your misery, because this is certainly true, and it is God who has wrought such acknowledgment within you. But you must not rest satisfied with this. God wants your realization of sin to increase. God desires, through continuous awakening and enlightening of your conscience, to help you realize as the most terrible part of your sin, that it is an offense against God, that you have com-

mitted a crime against his majesty, his holiness, his love; that you have dishonored his name, and bereft him of his glory. I have sinned *against heaven and against thee,* are the words given by Christ himself as the confession of the prodigal son, and it is just this confession his spirit will work in all of us, as surely as we have sins to confess.

And not only must you have a craving for, but also accept the comfort and the peace of the forgiveness of sins in your heart. As in your first conversion, so also in your continuous daily conversion. You do not outgrow it until sin by your blessed death has been entirely annihilated. But it is God's will to give you more than forgiveness of sins and peace of heart. He wants to restore his image within you; that is, implant in you in an increasing degree the mind of Christ, so that your ability to think, feel, and desire just what he did may be perfected in you, that you may love as he loved, live as he lived, doing good to your fellow men, serving God in everything; in short, revering and glorifying the Father and the Son by your whole life.

Then the greatest thing to you will not be just this that good may come to you, spiritually

and bodily, — behind this desire a great deal of selfishness is hidden even in Christian-minded people, — but the principal thing to you, as far as you yourself are concerned, will be that you may *become good,* be able to do *what is good* to the honor and praise of the name of God.

As Jesus said: ". . . But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name," so you learn to say: As God wills it, happen what may to me! Let me but pass through cross, tribulation, or affliction, so long as I may but remain in the schooling grace of the hand of God, even as the clay in the hand of the potter, so that he may form me according to his will in the image of Christ to the honor and praise of his glorious name.

This is my greatest happiness.

Our dear Father in heaven desires, as I have before stated, to give you something more than the forgiveness of sins, and this something is: that he will so educate your mind that it becomes your "meat to do the will of the Father," that it is your greatest joy and pleasure to glorify God by bearing fruit in faith, patience, humility, meekness, obedience, and love — and all the works of love: toward your family, your neighbors, your countrymen — and toward

Jews and gentiles. Yes, indeed, also toward Jews and gentiles! For Christ died for them also. His love embraces them all, and he will give you power to love richly even as he loves richly. It is his mind that is being implanted in you — the image of God — that your joy may be perfect.

Then be not cramped at heart nor niggardly in your love! Expand your heart, open it wide that he may fill it!

Let us remember that he who commenced his great high-priestly prayer thus: "Father, glorify thy Son that thy Son also my glorify thee," he closes it like this: ". . . that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them!"

And then let us by no means forget that whenever we pray the first petition we in reality pray that the name of God may be glorified on earth through us.

"Your son is an honor to you," the friends of father and mother say to them when their son has passed a creditable examination, or has distinguished himself in some other manner that is spoken well of. At the words, "Your son is an honor to you," the hearts of father and mother swell in joy and gratitude, and

they feel amply repaid for the many sacrifices they have made for him. And the son rejoices fully as much for father's and mother's sake as for the success that is his. God grant that all of you, my young friends, may experience the joy that comes to every good son and daughter when they reflect honor on their father and mother.

Now, this is something so thoroughly human that it is easily understood.

But behold, the first petition really would bring home to us something that corresponds to this. Just think of it, that among the inhabitants of heaven it may be said of you wherever you may roam, at home or abroad: There is a child that does honor and credit to its father, and the Father himself, the Lord of heaven and earth, is observant of it and rejoices.

"When is this done?"

Why, "this is done when the word of God is taught in its purity and truth, and we as the children of God lead holy lives according to it," as Dr. Luther puts it.

Live according to the word of God, do what you know to be the will of God, be like unto Jesus in your whole life. Then you live as

behooves the children of God. Then shall the denizens of heaven to-day point to you and say: He, or she, is a child in whom the Father is honored. And from on high shall sound: Glory be to Him who can transform sinful human beings into holy, righteous and truly good people so rich that they resemble our Lord Jesus Christ himself!

And every time your father and mother give thanks to God for the joy and pride their son or daughter is giving them, then the name of God is hallowed through you.

And when some suffering one that you visited, some sorrowful one that you comforted, some destitute one that you helped, thanks God for the comfort and help so received, then the name of God is once again hallowed through you.

And even those who do not thank God nor as a rule care anything about him, sometimes, when they see a person who in his life resembles Jesus, will say: "If true Christians are to be found on earth this person is certainly one." And then it more than once has happened that some one far distant from God was led unto God by the power of Christian example.

O, that your life in the love of Christ might exert such a compelling force! For then is the name of God hallowed through you, when such people are, in the day of their visitation, brought by your example to praise God for salvation and peace.

"O what an honor, all thought surpassing far!" I think we have reason to sing, when we consider that *we* shall be permitted to help increase the glory of the name of God both in heaven and on earth!

III.

Thy Kingdom Come.

1. The Kingdom, the King, and His People.

We sometimes speak of world-kingdoms, and indeed it is an expression conveying grandeur!

And how have not one after another of the great and powerful ones on earth felt their hearts expanding at the thought of the honor and happiness which would be theirs if they as conquerors could be at the head of such a world-kingdom! And what sacrifices have not in the course of time been made in order to reach such a goal! What shrewdness of thought, what guile, plotting, and cruelty have not been resorted to! how many bones have not been crushed by the chariots of war! how many groaning, bleeding hearts have not been trodden by iron-shod heel, and how has not human blood flown like rivers, and all this in order that one man might grasp a world-

conqueror's sceptre! We call to mind such men as Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, and Napoleon I.

There is, however, but One who actually accomplished this. And he attained the goal not by shedding the blood of others, but by shedding his own blood; not by striking wounds, but by healing wounds; not by cruelty, but by love!

"Alexander, Cæsar, Charles the Great, and I founded kingdoms, great kingdoms," says Napoleon, "but we all built the strength and greatness of our kingdoms on the sword, that is exterior power, force, and compulsion — and the greatness and strength are things of the past. Jesus of Nazareth founded his kingdom on love — and, behold, even at this day his subjects all over the world would die for him."

What all these world-conquerors with their armies of millions by means of fire and sword vainly aspired to do, to subdue all nations on earth, this has been accomplished and is being done before our very eyes even now. "Go ye and make disciples of all men" — get the nations to do my will, to render homage to me!

Such are the orders of the Prince.

And "like dew from the womb of the morn-

ing" his armies march forth — not an array of mail-clad knights armed with spears and lances; not with war chariots and implements of destruction, but with the word of faith in their hearts and mouths do they go forth to battle. To begin with they were but 10–12 poor fishermen and a few simple women; they had nothing to offer except the word — the word of the son of a common carpenter, who was executed by being nailed to a cross, was laid in a grave, and as "some said had arisen from the grave." Curious world-conquerors, were they not?

O, but the victories won!

Well, what results can be shown? What do we see in a survey of the entire world? By the shores of the Arctic, below the scorching rays of a tropical sun, from the remotest West to the most distant East, in the old and in the new world, within the darkest Continent as well as on numberless islands in mid-ocean, among the inferior races Hottentots and Bushmen as well as among the educated and learned Hindoos and Chinese do we find people who not only live for the Lord Jesus Christ, but who gladly would die for him were this required. And "he must, indeed, be a good master, for

whom after a service of 86 years the servant still gladly enters the fire," said the devout Claudius, when the aged Polycarp rejoicingly ascended the pyre to die as a martyr.

Is not Napoleon right? Do not the servants of this king even now boldly and voluntarily, constrained by the love he has kindled in their hearts go forth into pestiferous climes or to cannibal lands, where they know death lurks at every step they take, in order to fulfil the errand of their Lord, making disciples of all men?

And have we not even at this day martyrs in Zululand and Madagascar, who would rather be cast into prison, be tortured, or even killed than forsake that Lord who has won their hearts?

And right here in our own country, where we hear of the early death of some worker or other in the fever-laden mission fields, are there not at least two for each one so departed young, strong men, who eagerly ask God and his people to be permitted to go forth and fill the ranks?

There is no power in the world like the power of the kingdom of Jesus! But the strength of his kingdom is — his love. For,

"When Jesus enters land and nation,
And moves the people with his love,
When yielding to his kind persuasion,
Our hearts his truth and blessings prove,
Then shall our life on earth be blest,
The peace of God on us shall rest."

—Hymnary, 173, 3.

What changes! Here the prince, the beggar, the savant, and the ignorant find peace for the troubled heart. Righteous laws and ideal social conditions replace tyranny and oppression. Peaceful endeavor for betterment and progress in all walks of life is the order of the day. Yea, mutual love and kindly fellowship have superseded enmity, slavery, and cannibalism, in fine, when Jesus enters the former unclean and unhappy life of mankind, it is purified and hallowed.

What king can perform similar wonders?

"Could a realm on earth be found" — a kingdom whose king were powerful enough, rich enough, and good enough to secure for all his subjects all good things and protect them from all evils, think of it — o, that such a blissful realm were to be found on our earth! If such a kingdom were to be found, how people would pour right into it! And what comfort and happiness would not such a place offer to crushed and bleeding humanity!

O, were but such a realm to be found!

Friends, it *is* found. It is the kingdom of Christ Jesus — true, not *of* this world, but nevertheless *in* this world until it is perfected in the world to come.

And citizens of this kingdom we are all who with a sincere heart can sing:

O Jesus, thou art mine,
I also will be thine.
Heart, soul, and life I've given,
Receive me in thy heaven!
Accept me, Lord, and do
With me as thou desirest,
Until through conflict direst
I gain thy image true.

—Landstad, No. 532, 1; transl. K. S.

If from the heart we can say this, then Christ is our Lord and King, and we are his people. In his house we live, at his table we eat, in his service we are employed, and under his roof we rest.

And he treats us as he always has treated his own: forgives our sins, heals our wounds, rescues our lives from perdition, and crowns us with loving kindness and mercy — he leads and guides, chastises and comforts us according to our needs.

And he guards and protects his people

against all their enemies. "For if God be for us, who can be against us? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." For our King has all the power in heaven and on earth.

My Lord, what a kingdom! And what a king!

O people of the Lord, you are, indeed, well provided for and well situated! Lord, increase our faith!

"It seems as though dawn is breaking about me," wrote an author in one of our daily papers, "when I behold what the power of Jesus Christ has wrought in me, in my brother, in my sisters that serve him; when I think of what he has worked in all these souls that gather to worship him, our Lord and God; what he has accomplished in the different congregations all around in the Christian countries!"

Yes, indeed, we might see the dawn approaching, all of us, had we but eyes to see.

Take, for instance, this fact that the author of the Illustrated History of Missions brings out in his introductory remarks:

He writes: Wherever a people has been brought under the influence of Christianity pure

and simple, fully conformant with the Holy Scriptures, that people has in a greater degree acquired also civilization, power and general happiness than other peoples. But where Christianity is either adulterated or entirely absent we in a corresponding degree find inferior civilization, that society suffers from sad defects, and prospects for the future are darker.

Protestant Christianity is acknowledged by the peoples of England, Scotland, Holland, Prussia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, British North America, the United States, the South African colonies, Australia, and New Zealand. None of the older Protestant countries belong to the regions on earth most favored by nature. But nevertheless these states rank highest in civilization, and social conditions are far better than in other countries. Their commerce has reached a development far in excess of anything similar heretofore seen in the world. In the realms of discovery, arts, and sciences, general culture and prosperity, as well as in power and liberty, these countries have progressed during the last century and a half to an extent that no other states, even in double the time, can equal. Thus far the author quoted.

Does not this demonstrate beyond a doubt

that our king, Jesus Christ, is the king of kings, when such results can be brought in proof of the efficiency of the truth he proclaimed on earth just as soon as the nations acknowledge him as their king, even where the allegiance to him as far as a great many are concerned is but of an exterior kind?

But still more. We have a passage in the 110th Psalm, verse 2: "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies!"

Also among the enemies our king, the Lord Jesus, speaks the final word — indeed a comforting truth to all the citizens of his kingdom!

We remember that we have been taught in our childhood . . . that God tolerates sin, that is, he lets men persevere in their wickedness when they choose to — they have the faculty of choice, you know — but he sets a limit to their sin, that is, he says, "so far and no farther," and directs everything in such a manner "that all things must work together for good to them that love God." And all things must serve to glorify him and reveal his majesty and power. Here I will again take the liberty of quoting from an author: "It is sad to see that the Jews are blind and that the heathen multitude still

lives in the darkness of idolatry — that Christ is rejected by the men of distinction among the Christian peoples, and that we ourselves are so sadly lacking in faith and charity."

But does this sad state of affairs so effect our God that he can find no remedy for it?

Were, perhaps, Cajaphas and Pilate, who in their blindness and wickedness slew the Son of God, able to hinder his work of salvation? Or could the Jews by their unbelief stay the extension of the kingdom of Christ on earth? Did not their attitude hasten the spreading of the gospel?

Just let men build their tower of Babel *against* the Lord; he sees it, and they must work *for* him. Our era gathers materials from the bowels of the earth and from the vault of heaven, from the coffers of nature and from the workshops of thought, in order to build a tower intended to gather all the nations in one great temple of nature so that the church of Christ shall stand empty. It looks as though "nothing would be restrained from them which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11, 6). But rest easy, the most High has his own intentions. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things" (Rom. 11, 36). The church is the

Lord's and he shall lead his cause to victory. Be silent before him, expect him at any time, serve him, walk in the fear of him, and little by little you will perceive his wisdom, and with holy fear and holy joy worship and praise him. (Bishop Laache.)

To victory, aye, to eternal victory shall the Lord Jesus, our king, lead his own — and our cause. All opposition against him shall cease, all contradiction shall be silenced when he in glory visibly returns to our earth, he and all the holy angels with him. All that have hardened themselves against his saving grace, all that have spoken boastingly against him, they that have exalted themselves and despised his people and his work in the world, O how infinitely small they will feel, and how anxiously will not their eyes turn to him from whom they are to hear their final judgment, when all knees shall bow before him and all tongues confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And we, that have believed on him, "in glory we rise to meet him," to live and reign with him in the new, purified earth in which righteousness dwells, and where God — love — is all in all.

Then is the kingdom of God that we now pray for really consummated. Then are the words fulfilled: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21, 3. 4).

And "he which testifieth these things saith: Surely I come quickly." And who would not join them in that answer: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22, 20).

And so we really do answer whenever we pray the second petition: Thy kingdom come! Because this is just a prayer for the progress of the kingdom of God toward its final eternal victory and consummation.

Possibly you may think it curious that we have so far always spoken of the kingdom of Christ, while the second petition really says: Our *Father,* thy kingdom come! Let not this affect you, however. In Psalm 2, 6 we read the following words of the Father about the Son:

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," and so it is correct and right to call the Son our King and the kingdom his kingdom. And in Psalm 110, 1 we have these words of the Father *to* the Son: "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This is the reward of the Son for his obedience to the Father even unto the death on the cross. The Father has highly exalted him, and given him a name at which every knee should bow (Phil. 2, 9. 10). "Because he hath seen travail I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong," says the Father (Isa. 53, 11. 12).

This is what is now happening before our very eyes: The Son subdues the kingdom that the Father has promised him, and the Father himself makes it subject to him, and arms the Son for his victorious advance over the entire earth, according to his promise . . . I make thine enemies thy footstool.

It is the fulfilment of this promise of the Father to the Son we pray for when we say: Our Father, thy kingdom come!

Do we not stand on solid ground when we pray the second petition? Shall we not firmly believe that our prayer will be granted?

2. How Do We Pray the Second Article?

Those who turn their backs on the Lord Jesus cannot pray it. Many say with the rulers (Psalm 2): "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," that is the bands of the Lord and his Anointed one. They say like the wicked husbandmen, we will not have this one, that is, Jesus of Nazareth, to rule over us. Now whether it be openly expressed by awowed atheists or it is a secret thought of the heart: I will not let the word of God and the spirit of Christianity get power over my mind and regulate my life; earnest godliness is a yoke I refuse to carry, I only want to do what I feel like, it all really amounts to the same thing. Let it be said to every one that wishes to be *free* in this manner: It is a desperate course you have chosen in forsaking your rightful Lord and King who passes onward from victory to victory, and allying yourself with and fighting under the flag of an enemy who is steadily losing ground, and whose final downfall is certain. Who has ever heard the like of such folly? That a traitor might enter the ranks of a conquering enemy when his own king suffered defeat, for the sake of

gain, we might conceive. But to turn traitor to a victorious sovereign, when the enemy's defeat is assured, who can comprehend it?

Yes, you are a deserter to the enemy, you that break away from the ranks of the warriors of Christ in order to go your own way. It is of no avail that you loudly proclaim: I want to be free, I want to be my own master! You will be bound by the bands and cords of sin instead. It may be the invisible, yet strong bands of selfishness, self-sufficiency, and arrogance, or the golden chain of avarice, or the noisy, rusty chains of abominable vices that you are bound with, they are all the bands and chains of "the prince of this world." But, "now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out," saith He, unto whom is given all power in heaven and on the earth. Hence it is a condemned prince, a prince destined to defeat, that all those prefer who reject the mild and kindly rule of our Lord Jesus Christ. They would be free, but never along these lines get to be anything else than slaves, and, think of it, the slaves of an infamous, defeated prince!

No, let the Son make you free, then shall ye indeed be free, testifies our Savior, the Prince

of victory. O, that you knew how delightfully sweet the liberty is that he gives us, how light his bands, the bands of his divine love, you would readily understand that even after a life of 86 years in his service, we would willingly go through the fire for him, were this required.

But though they that do not love the Lord Jesus and desert him in order to follow the wilfulness of their own hearts were to try, under specially serious circumstances or momentous occasions in their lives, to pray: Our Father, thy kingdom come! — alas, what would it amount to but an abomination before God! O, that all who refuse to do the will of the Father or to do homage to the Son, and place their lives at his disposal, would earnestly reflect on this fact: that when they in such a condition of mind do that which is the very best they know of, viz., to pray the Lord's Prayer, even this their prayer is an abomination to God! The very best an abomination! What, then, will all the rest be? What are we to tell such an one?

"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way" (Psalm 2, 12). Kiss the son, pay homage to him as your King. Bow before him, ask his forgiveness for the sin you have committed by forsaking him, your rightful

Lord and King, who ransomed you with his blood that you should be his own, he who made you his own property by the blessed sign of the cross in holy baptism. Pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you may believe in the infinite love of Christ Jesus for you! And you shall experience, as thousands and thousands before you have done, that as you learn to believe the truth that he has loved you with eternal love and so loves you now, there is born in your heart the love for him that gladly submits to his will. But we, who through faith in Christ are the children of God, the Father, how do we pray the second petition?

Let each and every one of us ask ourselves: Is this what I mean: God, grant me to stay in thy kingdom and have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, while I am here on earth, and to go to heaven when I die, is this what I pray for, and nothing more?

Alas, how cramped our hearts are, even after we have become the children of God! How difficult is it not for the Lord to give us the mind he desires to give, and make us as rich as he fain would! As long as we were strangers to the spirit of the children of God, and selfishness was the great moving-power of

our lives, we always felt that our own dear selves, and what might be of advantage to us, was the principal thing on all occasions. Christian friends, shall this same sentiment prevail even now, when we have become the children of the Father, and Christ Jesus is our Savior, brother, shepherd, and King? Were we to have arranged the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, do you not think some of us would have placed the fourth petition at the head of the list, some of us made the fifth number one, next the sixth and the seventh — these petitions first and foremost concern us — and next in order the second and third, and lastly perhaps the first petition?

But what did our Savior say? After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; that is: Thy first care be that which is God's, then you may think of yourself and that which is yours.

This is a severe demand, say some of you? I entreat you not to utter such thoughts, for then you cannot be aware of what you are saying.

A father, in the kindness of his heart, so

overwhelms his child with proofs of his love, that the child cannot but feel confident that it enjoys the father's love to its fullest extent: then the child in gratitude and reciprocal love, in whatever it may undertake, will regard its father's joy, honor, happiness, advantage and wishes as first and foremost in its life. Now, who would call a relation of this kind severe and onerous? No, it is, on the contrary, the very happiest relation of child to father that can be conceived of.

It is just this kind of a child-spirit God instills in us who by faith in Christ Jesus are children in his house. The three first petitions tell us that this is what the Lord would have us be, that is, he will so transform us. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalm 81, 11); this means, expand thy heart, and I will shower blessings upon thee.

Then let us expand our hearts! We have the grace of the forgiveness of sins, we stand in a child's relation to God. He will so fill us with his love that what we first of all have at heart will be that God's glory, God's kingdom, God's will may be furthered among us and on the entire earth. Then the mind of Christ Jesus has entered our hearts, for his

prayer was: "Father, glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee" (John 17, 1), and: "Father, glorify thy name!"

This is a little about that toward which God is anxious to help us who believe on him.

Let none of us fancy themselves better or try to make others believe us better than we are. Let us admit that we all are slow-learning disciples in God's school. Slowly we learn to comprehend what the will of God is in all instances, small progress do we make in performing what we have comprehended and in acquiring the image of Christ.

It is, indeed, humiliating to make this admission, but it is the truth. Next to the situation of coming before God with our crime and guilt, praying: God, be merciful to me a sinner, and finding a God with more than a father's merciful heart, I know of no situation more humiliating than to get your eyes opened to see how many more benefits and blessings God would have given us, how much more than we have, more faith, more love, more peace and strength God would have granted us, how many more blessings might have flowed from our lives to those who are living with us and to those who are to live after us, in fine, how much

nearer we might have been to the image of Christ if we had but been more apt pupils, more faithful than we have been!

Indeed, it is humiliating!

But just let us humble ourselves before God, and not only before men. Let us ask God's forgiveness for our lack of faithfulness and for all that in which we have sinned and been negligent. Then let us strive to make better use of the grace of God that has been bestowed upon us, so that we may constantly acquire more and more fully the state of mind necessary in order to pray the second petition as our Savior intended it should be prayed.

3. Glorious Prospects.

"I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," this is the promise of the Father to the Son (Psalm 2, 8). "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." Such is the promise of Psalm 22, 27.

As I listen to such promises, a beautiful picture unfolds itself before me. I see nation after nation all around the world do homage to

Jesus Christ, I see his gospel proclaimed, the Bible translated, and the name of Christ Jesus worshiped in all tongues, the cross planted on houses of worship and cemeteries all around the world. And, finally, in completing the beautiful prospect, "so shall all Israel be saved" — in like manner acknowledging Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Then is the return of Christ and the consummation of his kingdom in eternal glory come nigh, indeed.

Friends, let this great and beautiful thought be living within us when we pray the second petition!

IV.

Thy Will Be Done on Earth as It is in Heaven.

1. Jesus and the Will of God.

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2, 49).

This is the radiant superscription over the entire life of Jesus. It is the program of his life: I must be about my Father's business, about his word, his work, his will. As the fish must be in the water, the plant in the light in order to live and thrive, so the essential life-condition of Jesus is to be about his Father's business. Were he to have abandoned his program, what then? But he shirked not. We recollect his notable words: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4, 34).

His meat!

Tired, thirsty, and hungry he had seated himself at the well of Jacob, outside of Sichar;

and when he asks the Samaritan woman for a drink of water she raises objections. Perhaps he got water, perhaps not. It seems rather as though they had both forgotten the matter, so occupied did they become, — and with what? She ultimately with the sorrow and shame of her sin and a dawning hope of having found Him who could heal the woeful hurt of her life — he with speaking words of life and tendering living water to a fallen woman who, according to human judgment, deserved only the contempt of decent people.

Right here there are two things that are especially impressive. First: That it is the will of the Father that such miserable ones as this woman are to be met and helped in this manner; second, that it is meat and drink for our Savior to be occupied with such "care of souls."

That he can forget fatigue, hunger, and thirst because of solicitude for this woman's soul is divinely great. And no less great, but of imposing grandeur, is his treatment of her, such expressions we would use were it permissible to use such genuinely human expressions of our divine Savior, when we note the psychological acumen, the pedagogic wisdom that characterizes his dialogue with this woman.

But greatest of all, more touching than everything else is to me the infinite patience he shows, and the love that is the fountain-head of patience, the Savior's love, that hungers and thirsts for saving a sinner — more than the tired wanderer hungers and thirsts for meat and drink.

This semi-heathen woman, steeped in sin, so slow of understanding, so earth-bound, so "wriggly and perverse," as it seems — he does not give her up, does not desist until he has touched the tender spot of her conscience and found a point of contact and called forth a desire to receive his gospel message — of the living water, of the true worship of Christ.

This is the will of the Father, and it is meat, yes, both meat and drink for our Savior to do the will of the Father. O the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge — and of love! "For God will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of truth" (1 Tim. 2, 4). And because the Father's will is also the will of Christ Jesus, he also will have all men to be saved.

The Father says:

> Go forth, beloved Son of mine,
> To bear the woes of all mankind

To wrath of mine subjected!
Go, suffer thou the cruel pain
That men salvation thus may gain,
Now, wilt thou undertake it?

And the Son answers:

Yes, Father, willingly I go,
Send what thou wilt upon me!
Let come the bitter cup of woe,
I'll drink it and adore thee.

—Landstad, No. 305, 2. 3; transl. K. S.

And that bitter hour comes upon him, more excruciatingly bitter than all bitterness this earth has ever witnessed.

He sees before him all the bodily torture his executioners will inflict upon him, and he feels that ineffable anguish of the soul, the horror of death that wrings the bloody sweat from him. But as he recognizes that it is the will of the Father, that he must tread this path in order to save the fallen generation, he prays: Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Thy will be done! He gives himself wholly, without reservation to the will of the Father, and then he is strong; comforted he arises and goes forth without fear to meet the very worst.

2. Heaven and the Will of God.

Among the inhabitants of heaven the will of God is done in perfection.

Who are these inhabitants of heaven?

In the first place, we think of the angels of God. They are good, holy, and blest. Heaven is their dwelling-place, the mansion of God, but they also move about here on earth — on errands of God — visibly when God so desires, otherwise invisibly. Their bliss is: They know God, love him, praise and worship him, perform his will.

And so glorious is he whose essence and will are love from eternity to eternity that the angels experience an ever new and unutterable bliss in doing his will and executing his errands.

What jubilant joy do we not feel is his who cries out: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord," —and in the host that sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men!"

And we think of that throng of ransomed sinners which St. John saw before the throne of

God, that "host arrayed in white, like thousand snow-clad mountains bright — those of glorious fame, who from the great affliction came, and in the flood of Jesus' blood are cleansed from guilt and blame" (Hymnary 492).

In them the will of God has been done, they have attained the goal God led them to, and now God's will is done in them and with them without opposition or hindrance throughout all eternities.

What is their condition, do you suppose?

Or: What do we, who by faith in Christ have the hope of eternal life, expect to enjoy when we come home to God?

Well, according to what is revealed to us just this: No sickness, but eternal health; no want, but eternal gratification; no vexation, but eternal pleasure; no sighs, but eternal delight; no fear, but eternal peace; no shame, but eternal honor; no sorrow, but eternal joy; no weeping, but eternal rejoicing; no hate, but eternal love; no sin, but eternal holiness; no death, but eternal life; no parting, but eternal communion with God, the saints and the holy angels.

Do we not feel like saying: "O were I but yonder, and all my dear ones, too, and all the dear friends of the Father!"

But when we have reached this haven, then all that which we just said of the angels shall also apply to us: So glorious is He whose essence and will are love from eternity to eternity that we shall experience an ever new and unutterable bliss in knowing him, praising and worshiping him, and doing his will.

As for the rest: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2, 9).

In other words: As heaven is higher than the earth, so the experience of the blessed ones will surpass the very highest we at present can conceive of.

A foretaste and an earnest of this bliss God has intended to give us even on earth. This we pray for when we say: Our Father, thy will be done on earth, *as it is in heaven!* Our Savior has told us that we may pray thus, and this is a token that God will grant it to us. He will more and more make us like unto the perfectly righteous ones in heaven, unto the holy angels, aye, like unto even our Savior himself.

3. We and the Will of God.

It seemed so self-evident to us that Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, must conform to the will of the Father. Were he to have departed from it, his mission to our earth would have been a failure; his life-work, to prepare salvation for all people, would have been frustrated.

Yes, this is so. But let us not forget that there is something else just as self-evident. And this is that your life and my life have been failures, and our life-work has been frustrated, just in the same degree that we have departed from the will of the Father. It holds good also as far as we are concerned, that the will of the Father is our essential condition of life, just the same as the water is essential to the fish.

Therefore we must pray: Father, grant that thy good and holy will be done *in* me and *with* me, that is, *form me* as thou wouldst have me, *lead me* as thou wilt, *use me* as thou wilt.

a. *Our Father, let thy will be done in me!* So we are permitted to pray early and late. Now, if God shall grant this prayer, what do you think will come to pass in our hearts? I

seem to hear many different answers from my hearers. Let me mention some of them.

One says, "Then I will see my sin."

Yes, you are right, child, then God will make you see your sin if you have never seen it before, and when you once have begun to see your sin, God makes you see *more of it,* you get to see that you have many more and many worse sins than you ever had any idea of.

"Then I would get to see Jesus," answers another. Yes. God be praised, when he grants what we pray for in the third petition, he not only makes us see our sin, but he also makes us see Jesus. If this were not the case, I do not believe I ought to pray the third petition. For to see my sin and not see Jesus is indeed terrible.

A third replies, "Then God gives me his Holy Spirit."

Yes, it is very true, that God's will is to give you the Holy Ghost so that when you pray: Thy will be done, then you also ask to receive the Holy Ghost.

For it is the Holy Ghost that works in us all that which is according to the will of God. And it was the Holy Ghost to begin with that

in so far enlightened us that we came to see our sins and to see Jesus as our Savior.

Now, what else will the Holy Ghost work in your heart besides bringing you to see your sin and to see Jesus?

The Holy Ghost will draw my heart unto Jesus.

He will teach me to pray: God be merciful to me a sinner, forgive me my sin.

It is his work that I can believe on Jesus, that I can believe the forgiveness of sins, that I can feel the peace of God in my heart. Yes, all this is fulfilment of the prayer: Our Father, grant that thy will be done *in me*.

And it is a grand and glorious thing that you may believe on Jesus as your Savior, that you may believe in the forgiveness of sins and taste the peace of God, it is all unspeakably great, but still this is not all. There is still much more that the Lord intends to give you.

What can that be? you ask.

Yes, you have a right to ask, and I shall try to answer. In order to make the answer as plain and easy to understand as possible, I will say: God will give you the mind of Christ Jesus.

But the greatest thing in Jesus, the greatest

thing in the world, is love. Jesus Christ has so loved the Father that the Father's will was his meat. He has so loved men that he has thirsted after bringing healing balm, comfort, and peace to all miserable ones and saving all that could be saved.

When God gives you the mind of Christ, it is first and foremost this love he wants to implant in your heart.

He will give you so to love God the Father, so love Jesus, that it will be your keenest delight to do the will of God. And he will give you so to love men that your soul thirsts after bringing healing balm, help, comfort, and peace to groaning, suffering human hearts as far as in your power.

b. *Our Father, grant that thy will be done with me!* If I only knew what were the will of God with *me* in each particular case! I am so afraid that my deceitful heart might lead me to believe *that* to be the will of God, which really is only my own selfish desire. How shall I get to know if what I just now contemplate doing is the will of God?

Such questions often come to honest Christians and especially to young Christians.

And it is right, dear youth, for you to ask.

Do not desist until you get an answer that you can rely upon. For, believe me, the day will come to every one of you, when it will be of more value to you than owning heaps of gold, to be able to say with absolute certainty: It is according to the will of my heavenly Father that I am in the place I now occupy. The good things and the joys I now have I can partake of with a good conscience, because I have received them from God, my Father; and the sorrows and burdens I have, they are also meted out to me by the same loving, faithful Father.

But to get the true answer, it is necessary that you honestly go to your Father with your questions. The questions may be many and of many kinds.

For instance, you may ask: Should I stay with father and mother or should I hire out? Or: Should I stay in my own country or should I emigrate? Or: Should I try to equip myself for a definite calling, so as to become for instance, a farmer, a mechanic, a teacher, a soldier, etc.? How am I to know what is the will of God and what his answer is to my question?

Well, it is not, thanks be to God, quite as difficult as it seems.

Just as you give yourself fully and wholly to God, to Christ Jesus your Savior, to be his own with your whole heart and in your entire life! Always seek a more and more intimate communion with him so that you may conform more closely to his image! Then you will with ever increasing sincerity ask: Lord, what wilt thou? And he will give the necessary light and advice. He will give counsel for you with his eye.

If, then, selfishness would beguile you, for instance, into leaving a helpless father and mother in order to find a more agreeable position among strangers, while it just would be the will of God that you should be "mother's right hand and father's sunbeam" in the home, he will remind you of the fourth commandment and you will say: Lord, I thank you for the reminder; now I know where my duty lies. With a joyful heart you will then sing:

> Now will I be,
> Dear Christ, with thee
> Where thou wouldst soonest have me.
>
> —Transl. K. S.

Or: Would selfishness beguile you into thinking better of yourself than you ought, so that you aim at occupying a higher and more

difficult place in life than your abilities and aptitude warrant, the Lord will remind you that it is better to be a good mechanic than a poor teacher, better to be an efficient teacher than a mediocre clergyman, etc.; that it is faithfulness everything depends on in the service of the Lord. Granted that you ask honestly, is it not him you desire to serve, when you ask what is the Lord's will with you? In this service it is always true that he is greatest who is most faithful — and of least importance in his own eyes. Faithfulness and humility always walk hand in hand, because the more faithfully you try to do your duty the more clearly you will get to see how much you still lack in having made your life reflect as perfect an image of Jesus as you fain would have.

And in all these things, in the common every-day toil as well as in the more difficult problems and decisions of your life, you may come to God, come to him with whatever you have at heart, and say: Our Father, let thy will be done with me!

Then pray earnestly and take note of the suggestions the Lord is wont to give his upright ones, and you will not fail in attaining the place that it is the will of God you should

reach. You will find the walk in life of which you may say: Here God has placed me.

Or, is God powerless to remove obstacles where he wishes his children to advance? Can he not at will place obstacles in your path?

Has not He in whom there was no guile, told us: Pray and it shall be given you! And has he not, himself, put this prayer in your heart and mouth: Our Father, thy will be done with me! Would he be likely to make cruel sport of his child, deceive his child, and let the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh be done with the one who with all his heart prays that the will of God be done? Impossible.

Therefore we gratefully acknowledge all the help and comfort God has granted us in giving us just such a petition as the third one.

In regard to the importance of observing the will of God and making a correct use of the third petition when one is about to choose a life-companion, I have some years back said what I have to say, and refer you to my lectures, entitled "Our Homes and Our Children."

We have spoken of the third petition as a source of rich comfort, and for obvious reasons. Rightly regarded and prayed it will, as we have seen, be an excellent remedy for the many

doubts and anxieties and worries that would otherwise present themselves on important and difficult occasions in the lives of men.

Finally, a few remarks in regard to our Savior's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane: "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

What our Savior has suffered of fear, horror, and anguish in facing death and that as the one bearing the sins of the world — to what extent his pure soul must have been tortured, when he is not even clear as to the fact he had previously been fully aware of, that this was the only way in which he could save the world, we will not even try to fathom; no one may sound the depths of this ocean of pain and anguish, fear and horror.

But we will not hide from you that possibly everyone of you may have to experience struggles of the soul, somewhat akin to those of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane.

"How you frighten us! Then I dare not become a follower of Jesus," someone may think. Such thought would be quite foolish, however.

In such a case I should ask: Dare you

rather meet the difficult dispensations of life *without* Jesus than *with* Jesus?

For the fact is, as we all know, that reverses and sorrows overtake the godless just as well as the godly. There is only this difference — but, of course, it is a very great difference — the godless have nothing to offer their souls in such sorrows but dark despair, while the godly who have learned of Jesus in Gethsemane, fight their way through, retain their faith and their peace of heart and emerge from the struggle strengthened and purified.

There is, for instance, a healthy, happy youth. His life lies brightly before him, he has courage, he has hope. Then suddenly everything changes. Tuberculosis of the knee-joint; an amputation is necessary, says the doctor.

"So I am to be a cripple for life!" Early and late the thought haunts him; as a tolling funeral bell over all his bright aspirations it rings in his ears.

Or: Say you had just found your heart's chosen one. Happy as never before you voice your joy: O, how good God has been to me! How gloriously beautiful life is! But, what happens: The loved one sickens — "Oh, well, it is nothing but a cold and will soon pass

away." Then some fine day the doctor's verdict: Tuberculosis, quick consumption! The day has ceased to be bright. Of course, the sun shines and the birds sing, as usual, but you notice them not.

My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Father, save me from operation and mutilation, says the one. My Father, spare the life of my loved one who is dearer to me than my own life, prays the other. God grant you, my friend, that you may complete the prayer by adding: Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt! Father, thy will be done.

Though it seems as bitter as death thus to sacrifice your own will, joy, and desire on the altar of God, believe me, yet blessings shall follow it.

Just as our Savior, after having prayed this petition, found comfort and received strength to go forth and meet what must come, so you also shall be comforted and shall sing before the Lord: "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73, 25).

Or:

"As God doth lead me I will go;
I do not ask to choose my way."

—Hymnary, 216, 1.

Or again:

Seems a thing to me a treasure,
Which displeasing is to thee,
Then remove such dangerous pleasure;
Give instead what profits me.
Let my heart by thee be stilled,
Make me thine, Lord, as thou wilt.

Lord, my praise shall be unceasing,
For thou gav'st thyself to me,
And besides so many a blessing,
That I now sing joyfully:
Be it unto me my shield,
As thou wilt, Lord, as thou wilt.

—Hymnary, 353, 3. 5.

"How goes it?" Luther once asked a friend who visited him. "Alas," answered the friend, "it doesn't go according to my will." Luther, who knew his friend to be a pious man, smilingly answered: "That's as it should be. For you have surrendered your will to the Lord God and pray every day, Our Father, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

c. *Our Father, grant that thy will be done on earth through me!* If we honestly and sincerely have prayed that the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven, we have also hereby undertaken both to live our own lives accord-

ing to the will of God and to help others do the same thing. Let us not forget this.

We pray that the will of God may be done on earth, and this means the entire earth, not only that it may be done within the narrow sphere in which we move. Hence this is a mission-prayer put into our mouths by the Savior himself.

As we already have seen, this is also true of the first and second petitions. It is well worth noting what a prominent place our Savior has given the mission in the life of his disciples. We note the following expressions by him: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24, 14). "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28, 19). "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16, 15). "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24, 47). "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10, 16). "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12, 32).

All these are passages expressing definitely that the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus shall be proclaimed to all people. By whom? Of course, by those who have received the gospel. Who else should proclaim it?

And what has our Savior said of the mission cause when he gave us the prayer "Our Father"?

He has said this, that when he has succeeded in moulding our hearts according to his will, and in giving us a childlike mind, with its true happiness, then this prayer will be the one constantly uppermost in heart and mind, the one that will come as natural to us as to breathe.

Our Father, grant that the glory of thy name may become known and praised over the entire earth! Let thy kingdom come, let it grow until it embraces all people! Grant that thy good and gracious will may be done on earth — all over the earth — as it is in heaven.

Then let no one come and tell us that mission work is nothing but a hobby which a few one-sided persons are riding, but which more advanced, "straightlined" Christians very well may ignore and still be as good Christians as ever. The kingdom is to comprise all people, salvation is to be offered to all; such is the pro-

gram of Christ's kingdom, such is the last will and testament of our Savior to his church.

And the program must not be disturbed, must not be broken by any honest citizen of the realm, the last will of the prince pertains to all called after his name. Not as a yoke that galls, however, shall this command rest on the church of the Lord, that it shall be a missionary church.

Because, the more God succeeds in forming his church and each one of us according to his will, the more love which is his, the love by which he would draw the whole world to his bosom and turn all its woe into joy and glory, will increase in us.

Just such is our God, our Savior. It is his pleasure, his bliss, to save sinners and draw the entire world to his bosom. Such also his church on earth. To gather into his bosom all that which is strayed, destitute, and lost, — that becomes the most blessed work we know; for we resemble him and cannot but resemble him.

But I feel so little of this blessed joy in his service, complains now one and then another. Of course, I do what I can as I have occasion. I pray and work for the mission, because I know it to be the will of my Savior, and I really do wish to do his bidding if for no other

reason then because I feel it to be my duty. But I am so afraid that all my attempts are but dead works without love.

Well, dear friend, this sort of distress we all know quite a little about, both old and young among us. It certainly does not hold true of anyone of us that our Lord is all done with forming us according to his image.

But should we lose courage because of this? Should we, perhaps, fold our hands and remain inactive until we find that everything is just as it ought to be with our love for Jesus and our joy in him and his work? When would we then commence to do real work? Indeed, it is mortifying and humiliating to find that we are so destitute of faith, and love, and joy in the work of the Lord, feel so little pleasure in serving as the co-laborers of God in his work, the greatest and most glorious on earth. Indeed, it is humiliating, for this poverty is our own fault.

But, nevertheless, the fact that you feel poor in love and faith, and suffer because of it, is evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in your soul. Far worse would it be were it to be said of you: Thou knowest not that thou art poor, and blind, and naked. He who has

begun the good work in you, he will complete it. Just be faithful, ever more faithful. Keep on praying, working for, and contributing to the missions; do it from obedience, according to the measure of love that God has already given you, for this is the very condition on which he will give you more.

Then the truth becomes more and more dear to us, that as often as we pray the third petition, we have the privilege of carrying forward and placing at the heart of the Father the thousand millions who are as yet ignorant of his will; and of seeking from him salvation and mercy for them all, in the certainty that God will hear such prayer, for he himself has put it in our hearts and mouths.

V.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread.

1. Bread the Gift of God and the Fruit of Our Own Labor.

Thanks be to God that our Savior has given us this prayer also! If he had not done so, what then? Well, then I don't believe very many of us would have had the courage to come to God, the highly exalted one, the almighty eternal God with such a worldly matter as to ask for bread, however much we might be in need of it. And were we fairly well situated as far as means and bread were concerned, it would have been even more difficult to adhere to the truth that every mouthful of food we eat is the gift of a kind and loving God, had not the Lord given us the fourth petition as a daily reminder.

For, in spite of all, it remains true, that it is God who gives food and clothing to rich and poor alike, to great and small, "even to wicked people without our prayers," as Luther has it.

If, for instance, the farmer, when he "eats his bread in the sweat of his brow," wants to tell us that he enjoys his food "thanks to himself," we shall certainly not enter into any useless discussion with him; but we should feel tempted to ask him whether he or any other person in the entire world can bring forth a seed or a kernel of grain with such wonderful power that when it is placed in the earth and dies it bears fruit and many kernels of grain grow forth from the one planted.

No, it is just as true to-day as it ever has been that

> Were all kings arrayed in row,
> In all their might and power,
> They made not smallest leaflet grow
> Nor meanest thistle flower.
>
> —Landstad, No. 451, 2; transl. K. S.

From the granaries of God we get our food, whatever we eat, — bread and fruits, milk, eggs, fish, or meat, this ought to be evident enough to anyone. If God were to close up his granaries, if he ceased giving fertility and growth both in the sea and on land, there would be nothing to live from, either for man nor beast.

Then let the first lesson taught us by the fourth petition be this, that the bread we eat

to-day is a gift of God, and if we are to get anything to live from to-morrow we must get it from God; and if he stops giving, even the millionaire must starve, for hard cash or negotiable paper cannot feed him.

Another thing of which we are reminded by this petition must be mentioned here. We pray that we may eat *our* bread, not the bread of others.

Now, I certainly believe that our Lord by the word "our" mainly has intended to convey that the mutual love among his disciples would not permit them to think only of their own need without regard to others. But this does not hinder us from also letting the word remind us of our duty in providing ourselves the bread we eat. St. Paul exhorts and commands by the Lord Jesus Christ that they who have neglected this duty should work . . . and eat their own bread (2 Thess. 3, 12).

These two things: (1) that bread is the gift of God, and (2) that we ourselves should earn our bread, — "work for our living," — we are fully informed of right on the first pages of our bible, where we read: "And God said, behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed . . . and fruit . . . to you it shall be for meat"

(Gen. 1, 29). "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it" (Gen. 2, 15). And later on we read: "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3, 17. 19), in other words you shall toil for your food.

What God means is this: I will provide for you, with the kindly heart of a father will I care for your sustenance, but I will give you bread as the fruit, the result of your own labor that you may enjoy it all the more. O, that we had eyes to see and hearts to comprehend! How we then would thank God for the love and wisdom so apparent in this arrangement, that it is as the fruit of our own work he will give us our daily bread!

"Mr. Lazybones," who is unwilling to work, but expects to be fed by the fruits of the toil of others, does not understand it.

Neither does "Mr. Mole," for he toils and burrows, frets and fidgets, and when the earth bears grain, the cattle thrive, the fisheries succeed, business flourishes, and there is sufficient to live from, he thanks himself and no one else. Then it is *I* that have been so able, so persistent, zealous, clever, careful, foresighted, etc., always *I, I, I.*

Both of these classes are strangers to the feeling of happiness that God wished us to have in receiving everything as gifts from his loving father-hand, the work, the strength, the ability to work, as well as the fruits of our labor.

Hence we should work, work with our hands or our brains or with both; this is the will of God to all of us. But what about the aged one, then, who is no longer able to work? Well, even he shall be permitted to eat his bread in the happy consciousness of having a right to say: "This God gives me as the fruit of my own toil." If he has been a faithful worker, a faithful steward, it is back salary for his work, the bread he now eats when he is unable to earn anything. Back salary is what he now enjoys whether it be a pension or interest-bearing savings or an acquired annuity; and had he neither of these things but eats at his son's or daughter's table, it is still back salary.

2. A Sermon on Love.

"Us" and "our," not "me" and "mine." Of course you may also say "me" and "my" both when you pray for temporal and spiritual gifts.

And you will feel especially inclined to do so when you are alone with God in prayer, and when you are in some distress which oppresses you specially. Then you just confidently mention your special trouble, and pray God for the succor you need, and rest assured that God will hear and help.

Still, while this is true, it is important for us to note this *our—us—our,* which as a guiding thread runs through the entire Lord's Prayer. *Our* Father — give *us our* bread, — forgive *us our* trespasses, lead *us* not into temptation — deliver *us* from evil.

You may say that the plural number was necessary, because Jesus in that hour had many about him who must be taught, or because this prayer has come into existence as an answer to the request: Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples (Luke 11, 1. 2).

But something more — much more than a grammatical rule is the cause of this choice of words, of this we may rest assured.

Do you recollect the "lonely old folks" in "Our Homes and Our Children," where the husband says: "Thank you; then I also will wait; for the food tastes twice as good when we are two at the table."

What is the reason for this? Love, of course, I seem to hear you answer. Yes, certainly, it is the mutual love of these two that is the reason why the old man even if he is quite hungry prefers to wait a while, until he can enjoy his meal together with her——the bride of his youth, the comfort of his old age.

We can very well, indeed, understand that between these two there is much use for the "*us*" — "*ours*" and very little use for the "me" — "my."

Thinking of this may, perhaps, help you better to understand the intent of our Savior in making use of these plural forms in the Lord's Prayer.

It is a sermon on love he has wished to give us. "They were of one heart and of one soul," is the beautiful testimony we hear of the first Christian congregation at Jerusalem. "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4, 32). No one had the heart to think only of his own needs without regard to others. The love of Christ shed in their hearts by faith effected this wonder that each one felt for the need of his brother as his own, and that all not only were willing, but felt a sincere joy

in being of help, comfort, benefit, and use to the others as far as they were able.

Such should be the disposition of the family of children of God the Father, and as such our Savior has also portrayed them for us in his own prayer.

If some one "at war against capitalism" tries to abolish private property rights, and *by force* introduce community of property, we all understand that this is not walking in the foot-steps of the congregation at Jerusalem.

Let us dwell awhile on this thought: You and I, and all who use the Lord's Prayer, are called upon to say of the bread we get that it is ours, — not mine — we own it together, we that are children of the same father.

But then we may well ask: Who can then pray the fourth petition? And, how do *I* pray this petition? Let us see that we are not like the small boy who asked for a cake for himself and his little brother, ("give us a cake") and then ate both his own and his brother's share, when he thought his mother wasn't looking.

Steeped in selfishness as we are, we should very likely despair of ever learning to pray the fourth petition aright, if it were not that all the commandments of the Lord to his children are

just so many offers — for every exhortation contains a promise. And the promise here is: Just like the picture our Savior has drawn of the Father's flock of children here on earth, he will make us, if we will but be apt and faithful pupils in his school.

But willingness to learn is required. That certainly you who have come to this school to learn, will understand. No use in coming here for others than those who are willing to learn.

Just as there is no sense in seeking God and asking to become his children unless we sincerely mean what we say when we pray: Lord, incline my young heart to true piety! No sense in praying: Lord Jesus, save me, accept me, let me be thine, unless we give him complete sway over us to lead our hearts and direct our lives as he wants to, and that we diligently strive to learn what he would teach us, and do what he tells us.

"I believe, Lord, help thou mine unbelief!" was the cry—the cry of distress from the father of the sick child (Mark 9, 24).

A similar cry I seem to hear from you in this hour. As many of you as have felt the call of grace from God, and have let yourselves be drawn unto the Lord Jesus, and have begun

to believe in his saving love, from your hearts is heard: Lord, I will — thou knowest it, for this will is thy work — I will try to be diligent in learning from thee and in doing what thou dost wish, but help, Lord, help, for there is yet something in me that wills not! If this is your heart's cry of distress, rest assured that you shall be helped. He who helped the poor father even though his faith was frail, and healed his sick child, he will also help you to overcome the selfishness of your heart. You shall learn to love as he has loved, love every one who is destitute and suffering. You shall experience what honest disciples of Jesus at all times in all climes have experienced, that it is "more blessed to give than to receive," that what you give to the needy affords you greater pleasuse than what you keep for yourself. "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebr. 13, 16).

Dear friends, do not forget this! For it is the way Jesus has pointed out to us in giving us his prayer. If we have accepted Jesus as our Savior, then this is the path we must walk, that we may more and more overcome our selfishness. To practice charity is the way to

increase in the intimate love and mercy of Jesus Christ, the way also for us to gain a joy in life that far exceeds any joys which the miser and the niggardly ever felt in counting their treasures, or any joy the luxurious and extravagant ever felt in his pleasures or his luxury. And, finally, this is the way to attain the inexpressible joy of hearing our Savior say to us in that great day: "For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat" (Matt. 25, 35).

3. Poverty and Riches.

Daily bread—this day.

These words remind me of the prayer of one of the pious men of the old covenant:

"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me!" (Prov. 30, 8).

Is not this a most remarkable prayer? Does it not show such thorough knowledge of the frailties of the human heart, as we should hardly expect to find in the time of the old covenant?

The common belief among the Israelites was, as we know, that prosperity and riches were proofs of the special favor and friendship of God.

The promise in Gen. 5, 28, of bountiful blessings in temporal and earthly gifts if the people of Israel would hearken to the voice of the Lord and kept his commandments, had been bred in the bones of every Israelite. It was, therefore, no wonder that a man like Asaph could be troubled by seeing that the ungodly prospered, that they grew rich and powerful while the righteous were "plagued all the day long" (Ps. 73).

God also in this respect brought up his people as children are brought up—first the milk of temporal, earthly happiness is given, then solid food, hard fare: the righteous is plagued, the pious Job becomes poor, the ungodly becomes rich and mighty. There is a development, step by step, in the comprehension of God's love and wisdom also when he weighs and metes out to his children as he sees fit their allotment of earthly blessings. There is growth and development right along until we reach the joyous acknowledgement of St. Paul in his well known words: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or naked-

ness . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8, 28 ff.).

But a goodly distance must he have traveled on this path of development who prays: Give me neither poverty nor riches.

Here it is first stated that God holds the power in this matter; he can make us poor, and he can make us rich.

Although we are children of the new covenant, there may yet be some of us who find it difficult in sincere humbleness to own that we are dependant on God even as far as our economical affairs are concerned. We, indeed, sing:

> All are alike before the Highest;
> 'Tis easy for our God, we know,
> To raise thee up though low thou liest,
> To make the rich man poor and low;
> True wonders still by him are wrought
> Who setteth up and brings to naught.
>
> Hymnary 230, 6.

When the prosperous are proud and haughty because of their prosperity, when the rich glory in their riches, and the poor despair because of their poverty as though there were no God to help them, then little we at heart own God's benign providence.

If we then look a little closer at the prayer of the sage, we marvel at his way of placing poverty and riches side by side, as two evils which he alike prays to escape. Who can match this? Does it not sound almost as though you were to say: Save me from sickness and health?

Surely may we pray: Dear Father, save me from poverty and penury! We cannot think without dread of the sufferings and dangers of various kinds that want and poverty may bring us. The heart trembles even at the thought of it and we involuntarily pray: Spare me, O Lord, let this cup pass me by! (Or, if we are already in the midst of such misery: Lord, save me!)

But riches? Can we say that we have felt a real need of praying: Dear Father, do not let me become rich? Hardly. Is this only because for most of us this would seem a perfectly superfluous prayer, as we have no more prospects of becoming rich than of becoming kings or emperors, princes or princesses? Or, is it because we have not the sage's understanding of the dangers of riches and the frailty of the human heart?

Has anyone of us at times felt a secret

desire within him whispring: O, that I were rich! or, O, that I had just so much of this world's goods that I might feel entirely comfortable without the constant need of pinching and saving early and late? When we must save in light and fuel during the cold and dark season of the year, save in food and save in clothing during the entire year, and year after year, it is very natural that a person living under such pressure for years feels tired of it all and wishes: O, that I had an easy competence! Perhaps it would then be easier to carry other burdens that must be borne.

Well, it is not so strange that people along in years and pretty well worked out may harbor such a wish. But I want to put the question as regards this to the younger generation. You will hardly claim that you are immune, I am sure. And I shall certainly be the very last one to judge you harshly because of it. No one expects you to have a full understanding of the dangers of riches, or an intimate knowledge of the frailty of the human heart over and against these dangers.

I have never been rich, as you perhaps know, and hence cannot speak of this from experience. But, nevertheless, I know that

riches are dangerous, and that it is *dangerous to covet riches.*

What does Paul say?

"But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things!" (1 Tim. 6, 9 ff.).

They that will be rich. We note in the first place this "will." It is more than to desire, more than to covet, though even these may be dangerous enough. Of course one may say: No, I will not be governed by my desire. But if the will has sanctioned the desire for riches, then it means that all one's ability and power shall be concentrated on becoming rich, and hence this gets to be the "great passion" of life, the aim in life.

And the ways and means? Well, one may keep to the honest ones, at least to start with. But if the pursuit of riches has once become the "one thing necessary," that takes precedence of every nobler aim in life, this one

pursuit has a most dangerous tendency to deaden the conscience. It may be a gradual process, so that the call for absolute honesty becomes less and less noticeable; in a certain single instance perhaps the voice of conscience remains unheeded; the power of resistance decreases by every victory over conscience in this one and several other instances and finally in every case in business life. Then we find use for a phrase like "business moods," entirely distinct and different from commonly accepted Christian morals.

And so we have the inclined plane case fully established. The tendency to slide is there and in constantly increasing measure. It seems possible at least to arrive at a point where conscience is *strangled entirely*, and the only question confronting one is this: How dishonest can I be without being detected and landing in the "claws of justice"?

In this case,, however, many of these expert accountants come to grief. At times it is hardly possible to pick up a daily paper without reading of the discovery of shortages in accounts, defaulting bank cashiers, etc., at home and abroad.

"They have fallen into temptation and snares

—foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in perdition and destruction,—they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

This dreadful fulfillment of the words of the apostle is constantly repeating itself.

Now as to the "many sorrows," it is self-evident that these vary their form with the different persons and cases. The difference is especially noticeable with those who keep within the limits of civil law as against those who go beyond these limits. But one thing is common to them all: They find mammon a cruel master, who rewards his servants poorly. This master never pays with peace of heart, hardly ever even with the ordinary, natural contentment in life, often disturbs the family peace, severs the tenderest ties, separates brother from brother and friend from friend. And truly that must be a cruel master who compels his servant to dress in rags, go begging at every door, and die in the most abject poverty while he has money by the thousands sewed into the filthy mattress on which he dies!

A cruel master! Aye, of this also they may speak who sit in our prisons, who have fled to some foreign land, or put a bullet through their brain, because in their insatiable desire for

money they have made free with the property of others. Oh, the sleepless nights passed in fear of discovery and of being exposed,—in anguish of what would happen to themselves and their dear ones in such a case, etc.

"They have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And it would not be amiss to say: "If it were only themselves they had pierced!" But we cannot refrain from dwelling in thought upon the many innocent ones who have suffered because of such crimes. We think of her who sits with a broken heart and a flock of little ones in the unhappy home, or even, perhaps, is left actually homeless, because the husband, the father, has been imprisoned as a criminal, has absconded, or is dead by his own hand. Nothing has he left for her and the little ones except sorrow, distress, and a dishonored name.

And we think of the numberless people of small means who had put their hard-earned savings in a bank that must fail, because he—the archthief—has used the money.

I see passing before my mind's eye young and promising men who from year to year have put part of their earnings into such a bank in order to be enabled to go into busi-

ness of their own, build their own home, etc., as well as older, toilworn men who had rejoiced in having something to fall back upon; when their earning ability should cease, they would have something in the bank. And I see the poor widow, probably unnoticed in the crowd, who had put every last penny of her small income into such a bank, all she had for sustenance in the time coming when she can earn nothing—gone it is, every penny of it!

When I recall instances of this kind and others similar, I am reminded of a story I read in my youth about the feast of Juggernaut in India. A seething multitude of people draw the gigantic wagon on which the idol is enthroned, by long ropes, while hundreds of thousands of pious pilgrims from all over India press forward in order to obtain a glimpse of the mighty god. A deathwail is heard ever and anon from the advancing procession as one or another is knocked over in the awful crush and ground down under the wheels of the ponderous vehicle. The next morning mutilated corpses mark the progress of the procession.

Is it not exactly in the same manner the god mammon proceeds and ravages?

The thousands to whom the pursuit of riches has become the one great passion in life, do they not resemble the ignorant multitude out yonder who vie with one another in getting a chance to pull the wagon of the monster idol? And is not the road traversed marked by crushed hearts and ruined human lives?

Truly it is dangerous to "*will be rich*"!

Let us hear the awful words of warning spoken by our Savior about the danger *in possessing riches*: "Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matth. 19, 23).

"Hardly!" And why? Because we are just the way we are, prone to make an idol of the thing we like. And wealth so very easily becomes the favorite idol, the idol that holds us in the most enduring bondage, because we can enjoy so many things we like and procure so much of comfort if we only have the money. Why did the rich farmer think he could say to his soul: "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry"? Because riches were his one and all, the idol of his heart. Why did the rich youth go away from Jesus just as soon as it became a question of choice between Jesus and riches? Because his riches occupied the

first place in his heart, were the idol of his heart.

And so we find it even in our day. Either God must be permitted so fully to be the God of the rich man, that he will say in perfect sincerity: Rather poor—if need be—*with thee,* my God, my Savior, than rich without thee. Otherwise mammon will become his god, and will ever more and more weave his heart into a network of the finest and strongest golden thread. Have you seen the spider's prey that struggles to escape from the almost invisible web, and struggles in vain—can never release itself? There you have an apt illustration of how mammon enthrails his devotees.

"Hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven!" It is difficult for him in the first place to feel a desire to enter the kingdom of heaven as long as he has the means to procure all that his heart desires of the joys and good things of this world. And, further, his mind is so fully occupied in taking care of and keeping the riches to which his heart is bound, that he can not suffer their loss, the loss of what offers so many advantages and enjoyment. Amid such cares neither time nor thought is given to God and the things imperishable. As

a rule, the more economically independent one becomes, the greater difficulty he experiences in acknowledging his dependance on God, and the harder it becomes for that indefinite longing after God which lies dormant in every soul to obtain a hearing.

But when at some time or other, this longing for God is awakened and begins to shape itself into a craving for God, so that one earnestly asks: What must I do to inherit eternal life, then the various hindrances of that golden web in which the soul is entangled, begins to assert themselves.

There is in the first place the regard for the social position one occupies. The instance we read of in John 7, 48 ff., constantly repeats itself: "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him—the lowly and despised prophet of Galilee? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

To be looked down upon (as in the case of Nicodemus) by one's own exalted peers, is a disgrace very few rich men are willing to bear.

Then we have the difficulties of competition. One may, for instance, have made use of certain "business tricks" in order to accumulate wealth, and now he would as an honest Christ-

ian feel it his duty to discontinue the system, but fear of not being able to compete with others, fear of losing out in business if he should be perfectly honest in word and deed, interferes. This, then, becomes the hindrance he is unable to overcome, and he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Next come the habits of life usually contracted through the accumulation of wealth. Much of this would have to be changed if one were to become an honest Christian. The social life one has been used to, perhaps, or the associations and friendships entered into must be rearranged, or even cut off. That a person whose entire mind and heart have been occupied only with his own dear self, one whose thoughts constantly have circled about the question, how to obtain the most agreeable joys of the table and a wardrobe according to the latest fashions, the most refined enjoyments of works of art, travel, etc.; or, how to utilize his present means in order to obtain power, honors, glory, and the like, — that such a person, when God's call comes to him, must feel that a radical change from within and without is necessary in case he should accept the call and enter the kingdom of heaven—this

we can readily understand. But none of us can fully comprehend *just how* difficult it must be for such a man to give God, who desires the entire heart and life for himself, an affirmative answer, *just how* difficult it is to assent to such a radical change.

But unto God everything is possible, praised be his holy name!

4. This Petition Also Proclaims the Master.

Jesus knew all about these dangers and difficulties—and many more; he saw much more clearly than any one of us the dangers of the *pursuit* of riches as well as of the *possession* of riches. And, therefore, it is not remarkable, that when he wished to teach us a prayer for earthly and temporal things, it would not be: Lord, give me riches! It must be: Dear Father, give me daily bread; that is, give me what I need for this earthly life!

O, how this petition, too, proclaims the master! As we have already seen, it is the child's place God has wished us to have with him, the little child's (of, say three or four years) place; such a child asks for a slice of bread when it is hungry, gets what it needs,

eats what it gets without anxiety or worry as to where the next meal is to come from, and feels so perfectly safe with father and mother as though they had storage rooms that could never be emptied.

That we, grown up children, should experience the happiness of enjoying this complete confidence of the child in the fullest possible measure, has been the intention of Jesus. Therefore he has given us the fourth petition in just this form. He wishes to educate us to such childlike confidence by this petition and to exercise us therein. Let us do our very best rightly to comprehend the meaning of the Savior and pray the petition according to his will! This alone is the way to gain more of the implicit confidence in our heavenly Father, that he can and will give us the bread we need. He *can,* for his storage vaults are indeed inexhaustible, and he *will* provide for the necessities of his children, for God is love.

Now, is there no more to be said of the fourth petition? Why, most certainly, a great deal more. But I had never intended to make an attempt toward saying all that might be said about the matters treated in these lectures.

But yet this one thing:

5. A Good Home.

Dr. Luther has called attention to the fact that we in this petition are permitted to pray not only for the food we need, but for all the things that go toward enhancing our temporal existence, our earthly happiness. And I will add, let us especially think of our homes.

What does it profit a man, if he have fields, cattle, money, goods — even though his fields were measured in square miles, his cattle numbered by the hundreds or thousands, his money counted by wagon-loads, his docks and warehouses overloaded with goods, — if he does not have a happy home? With an unhappy home, would he feel happy in his possessions? I do not think so.

A good home, where is it found? Is it found where every member of the family first and last thinks only of how he himself may be comfortable, works only for this, and feels at ease in the thought that he does no harm to the others?

If father seeks only his own pleasure, without regard for mother, and mother does the like, and if the children feel perfectly satisfied with behaving just well enough to escape

mother's wrath and father's punishment, is true happiness found in such a home?

No — you know better. When father does everything in his power that mother may be truly comfortable, and mother does the best she knows how that everything may be cozy and pleasant for father, then these two are leading a happy life. When the one thinks most of making the other happy, then each one of them is happiest.

And when father and mother together do all in their power that the children may enjoy a good home, and the children vie with one another in being of help and comfort to father and mother, then both parents and children enjoy a greater measure of happiness than when they all selfishly look only to their own comfort, do as little as possible, and expect to be waited upon and served by the others.

There is sacred truth expressed in the words of Acts 20, 35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive," more blessed to serve in love than in selfishness to demand service from others.

Where all the members of the home act according to this rule, there we find a happy home.

And now I wish to give you young folks an excellent bit of advice: Pray, and pray often: "Dear Father in heaven, bless my home! Let thy blessing so rest upon it that it may be a truly good home for father and mother, for us, their children, and all who belong to it!"

If you pray like this from a sincere heart, your prayer will be answered, rest assured of it! God will grant it, and especially in this way, that the Spirit of God reminds you of the duty you have in contributing your share toward making your home as cozy, pleasant, and peaceful as possible for all who belong to it. Your prayer for blessings on your home will establish a point of connection for such admonition of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit will spur you on, and enable you always to do your very best in your entire behavior in the home to show love, helpfulness, consideration, friendliness, and goodness.

The homeless. If we have a good home, rejoice in it, and thank God for it, we must never forget that there are those who have no home. Many a home is but a mockery of this beautiful word. The notion of home preëminently requires that love, security, and peace are dominant in it. In a home that lacks these

qualities the residents can never feel that indiscribable something which we call home comfort, even if dwelling and furniture are of the best, meat and drink, clothing, money, etc., are present in abundance. One would still, in spite of it all, feel homeless in one's own home.

This is always the case in a home where the husband, whenever he has been absent, dreads coming home, because she who should be the sunbeam of the house is no sunbeam, but a storm cloud, or where mother and her little ones dread father's coming home, because he is intoxicated, and therefore mean and cruel.

And, alas! there are many such homes.

If we have a happy home ourselves, ought we not feel the sincerest compassion for all these, great and small, who have never known this happiness? And if we pray God to bless our own homes, let us remember the *"our"* that our Savior has taught us when he gave us the prayer Our Father, in other words, let us think of the many unhappy homes, pray for those who dwell in them, and in every way do whatever we can that their conditions may be bettered. And we, who know whereof we speak when we sing:

When Jesus enters meek and lowly,
To fill the home with sweetest peace;
When hearts have felt his blessing holy;
And found from sin complete release,
Then light and calm within shall reign,
And hearts divided love again.
When Jesus comes, O blessed story!
He works a change in heart and life;
God's kingdom comes with power and glory
To young and old, to man and wife.

Hymnary 173, 2. 4.

we cannot for a moment be in doubt as to where the help is to come from.

Pray and work that Jesus may enter home and heart. When he comes and finds a place there, then there will be good homes, happy homes, otherwise never.

Homeless, what an unutterably sad word! Again I say: If we have a home and are grateful to God for it, we must not forget those who have no such home. And we must not forget the thousands of vagrants traveling about within the boundaries of our land, either. They are in the most exact sense of the word homeless. Just imagine what it must mean to be born, so to speak, on the road, to spend the years of childhood on the road, and later on through their entire lives to walk about from farm to farm, from county to county, from state to state,

never welcome, always suspected, often driven from place to place! Complete strangers as they are to the joy we feel in our home and the many beautiful associations that a home harbors, how destitute of joy is not their entire life!

Being aware of such conditions, how can we with a good conscience enjoy the many different blessings of a happy home, from our earliest infancy and until our last breath, without doing all in our power that the condition of these unfortunate ones might be bettered? Can we neglect supporting the work of love that has of late years been started in our country for the benefit of the unfortunates, such as children's homes, workingmen's colonies, etc.?* We should stand ready to support it with our prayers and with our contributions.

6. A Good Life Companion.

Those who are already man and wife, the newly wed as well as the older married couples, have a right to ask God for a good life companion when they pray the fourth petition. And could my words carry far enough I would

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* This refers to conditions in Norway.

say to every Christian husband and wife: My dears, do follow the advice of Dr. Luther, for it pays excellently well. If you have a good husband or wife as the case may be, thank God! And pray for continuance of blessings upon you both, that nothing evil may come between you and disturb your happiness. And if you have a husband or wife who is not good, then pray! Pray to God, who hears prayers and leads hearts like the brooks! Pray that the one who is not good may become good!

Then you will, perhaps, also as you pray realize that you have not been as good as you ought to have been, yourself. The Spirit of God will take occasion to remind you of your own sins and shortcomings, so that you will feel the need of asking the forgiveness of both God and your husband or wife. At all events, if your heart is sincere before God, you will ask him daily to give you more strength to live up to the requirements of "a good life companion" yourself; and your entire conversation will be charitable, considerate, patient, friendly, and good. In this way you may experience that God answers your prayer for the dear one. Rest assured that in this way you accomplish most.

Yes, this is just what I would say to all married people if my voice might reach them.

But also to you, young folks, I have a word to say in this matter. See to it that you also follow the advice of Dr. Luther in his explanation of the fourth petition, pray God for "a good" life companion when the time comes for you to think of matrimony.

Perhaps some of you young people who pray to God may think this too "wordly" a matter, when you come to God in prayer. I would say to you: Do not think so, my friends!

Rather reason like this: My heavenly Father thinks of his child with sincere sympathy in all things pertaining to the child's temporal and spiritual weal and woe. And we, who by faith in Jesus are the children of God, have received this sacred privilege that we may do all things we do in the name of Jesus thanking God, our Father through him, and then such important matters as engagements and matrimony can be no exceptions to the rule.

Oh, that all who are to be married would sincerely pray to God to get a good husband or wife before they take this important step! How many happy marriages and happy homes we would have in this land of ours!

I said, "pray sincerely," and we all very well understand, when we speak of this matter, that without sincerity we cannot expect a blessed return from our prayers. But alas! my dear friends, if ever the well-known adage, "easier said than done," holds true it is right here. In such matters of the heart as the ones we are now discussing, we find, indeed, that the heart is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17, 9), yes, so completely and insidiously deceitful, that it may seem as though *that* were the will of God which is only one's own selfish desire. Indeed, we here also have need of praying: Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts (Psalm 139, 23). But if you lay your heart open before God in such a prayer, and if you in your heart of hearts really ask God to lead you in your choice and give you a good husband or wife, he will grant your request, rest assured of this.

The blessing in having asked in this way you shall experience throughout your entire life, and perhaps in the greatest measure when in your wedded life the days come of which you must say: I have no pleasure in them. You will have a rich source of joy in the days of prosperity, and of comfort in the days of ad-

versity, whenever you think: I have received my husband or wife as a gift from my dear, kind Father in heaven.

Believe me, many an unhappy husband and wife have throughout their entire lives suffered bitterly because they neglected to consult God when they became engaged or got married.

Therefore I advise you, dear young friends, and Dr. Luther advises you: When you get so far that you can begin to think of engagement and marriage, pray God to give you a good life companion.

And he who prays God for a good life companion will have a constant reminder of leading such a life in his youth that he may be worthy — humanly speaking — of such a gift.

As for the rest, I take the liberty to refer to my book "Our Homes and our Children," especially the chapter on "How we secure a happy home."

The many other things Dr. Luther mentions in his explanation of this petition we cannot now dwell on. But let us give thanks and praise to God because he deigns to descend to the level of his children, exhorting us to speak to him of all things, the smallest as well as the greatest, for he will gladly hear and help.

7. Grace at Table.

Finally only this one thing: The saying of grace at table must not be permitted to die out in Christian homes. Let us keep on folding our hands, praying God to bless the food before we begin our meal, and thanking God for the meal when we close the repast. If we meet people who think this custom out of date, let not this effect us. True enough, the custom of sayng grace is old, at least fully as old as Christianity itself. Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus on the occasion of the repast with the two disciples at Emmaus blessed the bread before eating. And if the disciples of Christ from generation to generation in the course of well-nigh 2000 years have followed the Master's example in this respect, is it then so out of the way simply because the custom is an old one? It might perhaps be likely, though, that the custom of eating without saying grace is even much older — as old as heathenism itself.

VI.

And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, as We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us.

1. The Most Profound Need of Our Soul.

Glory be to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! And glory be to Jesus Christ, our Savior, that he has given us also this petition — the petition for the forgiveness of sins!

The most profound need of our soul is the need of communion with God, just as it is the child's great want to rest on its mother's bosom.

And if the child has offended mother it feels bad, and is not happy until it has said: "I beg your pardon, I won't do it again," and it has heard mother's friendly: "All is forgiven, my child." Then joy returns, the child nestles in mother's arms and all is well.

He, who knows the Father and knows what dwells in the Father's heart, and he, who knows me as no one else does, knows me even better than I know myself, he says, so shall you pray: "Our Father, forgive us our trespasses."

Then I know that just such children the Father in heaven will acknowledge as his children, and that they daily have need of forgiveness of sins — they are no better — and I know it is the purpose of the Father daily to forgive me my sins when I ask him to.

None of you, my dear youths, that seek God and long for peace, are strangers to this petition. When the Spirit of God began to enlighten your hearts and brought out the conscious necessity for prayer within you, then one of the very first things you saw was that you had sinned against God, and one of the first things you prayed for was just forgiveness of sins, was it not?

Some of you have called to mind one certain sin and pray: Father, for Jesus' sake forgive what I have done! Others among you do not feel especially burdened by any certain sin, but feel that the heart has departed from God and forgotten him that you should love

above all things, and you pray: God be merciful, to me, a inner, forgive my trespasses! And if there is anyone among you who feels himself a trespasser of all God's commandments — all the ten commandments — and really frightened because your sins are so many and so great, then the cry of distress in your soul will be this: God, be merciful to me for Jesus' sake, forgive me my many sins!

Yes, just so we are and feel, all of us, great and small, young and old. When our direst need dawns on us we all pray: Our Father, forgive our trespasses!

Hence we have the testimony within our own selves, in our own consciences, that we all are sinners before God, and that it is a life necessity for us to get forgiveness of sins; for when our conscience is awakened we connot bear the burden of unforgiven sin. We have the testimony within us that the need of heart-communion with God is the most profound need of our soul, just as the child needs to nestle on its mother's bosom. When a person can dispense with this prayer, what is the reason he can do so? His conscience is not awake. His soul is blind so that he does not see his own sins, his heart is torpid so that he

does not feel its most profound, its direst need.

Hence that must be a false spirituality they proclaim who allege that a truly free Christian has no more use for the fifth petition. Whether they say they lead a sinless life, or that although they sin daily it would be wrong in them still to ask for forgiveness of sins, because they have received forgiveness of sins once for all when they were converted and believed, — they are in both instances out of accord with what our Lord Jesus has taught us when he said: When ye pray ye shall say: Our Father, forgive us our trespasses!

Ought we not every day, as long as we live, pray the first, second, third, fourth, sixth, and seventh petitions? And then the fifth petition should form an exception, should become superfluous from the day on which we became Christians; and this without our Savior having given any intimation as to the special position of this petition? Imposible!

The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer is just as much as the other six a petition *for all* that are so far awakened that they know themselves and know the most profound need of the human soul and heart.

2. Do I Dare Believe the Forgiveness of Sins?

All you that have commenced to seek God, to long for God, and peace in God, you will not be able to do without this prayer, of that I feel assured. It seems to me I hear how early and late sighs like these steal forth from your hearts: Lord, remember not the sins of my youth, forgive me for Jesus' sake all that was sinful and wicked, receive me, let me be thine!

Yes, I do pray like that, you may say, but still I do not know whether my sin is forgiven, for it is so difficult for me to believe the forgiveness of sins. Alas, we know all about this distress also, and you are not alone in feeling thus.

But let me now tell you what I have so often tried to tell myself: The fact that our Savior himself has said that we should pray: Our Father, forgive us our trespases, what does that testify to? Why, it is the most convincing proof that the Father actually will forgive every one who prays thus.

Can it be right to walk about with despondent hearts, after having prayed as we have done, always doubting, always uncertain of whether our sins are forgiven or not — can this be right? No, indeed not.

God, the Father, will forgive and would have us believe that he forgives, and the fifth petition is a pledge of it. And the blood of Christ Jesus, of which our Savior says, "it is shed for you for the remission of sins, is a pledge of it.

My soul, "believe thou, then, that it is true, while such great pledge is given you." And say: Thanks, dear heavenly Father, that you have forgiven my sins!

"The older I get the more important it becomes for me to believe in the forgiveness of sins — and the more difficult it becomes at the same time." In this way he began his discourse, an old grayheaded layman, who spoke in the lowly cabin, where a few of us were gathered for a short hour of prayer. It is now more than forty years ago, and many things I have forgotten in the course of this time, but these words I have never been able to forget. It effected me most keenly, that he, the old pious man whom I venerated like a father, should make this confession. That it was of the utmost importance to believe the forgiveness of sins, I could readily understand, I felt just the same way myelf; but "more difficult — the older I get — to believe the for-

giveness of sins"! I had thought that only I — the new beginner — had any difficulty in believing this.

The speech of my fatherly friend of that evening was a help to me, however. His words and my reading of the works of Rosenius brought me light, and solved, to start with at least, some of my difficulties.

"To start with," yes — not once for all. And it is especially this I am interested in telling you young people now. The difficulties of believing the "forgiveness of sins richly and daily," will also always confront you anew. I do not say this in order to frighten you and discourage you, but to prepare you, and, if possible, arm you against that which is to come.

3. More About the Difficulties in Believing.

There are especially two things I wish to call attention to under this head. First, there may be some certain thing in your life that you have really acknowledged as a sin; you have prayed for God's forgiveness and for strength to overcome; you have believed you have been forgiven for it and have had the honest intention to be more careful next time; but still

you were worsted time and time again. I now refer to sins like a hasty temper, wrath, impatience, a tendency to think and speak evil of your neighbor, and the like.

And I am still mindful of the fact that you always anew must admit: not to-day, either, have I loved my God and Savior as I ought to, no, neither in my heart nor in my conversation have I honored and praised his name as it deserved.

You feel that there is sin and sin again for which you need forgiveness, both of commission and omission. But when you from day to day and year to year have asked forgiveness for these very same sins, and God ever enew has consoled your soul with the comfort of sins forgiven, and you still find so much that is deplorable and so much that is lacking both in your heart and your outward life, when, in spite of your endeavor to become better, you still find so much that you need forgivenes for, then perhaps you may be tempted to think: God must get tired of me, must be tired of forgiving. Can it be possible that God can still keep on daily forgiving me everything?

This question is to be answered with yes, and again yes; God both can and will continue to

forgive. He *can,* because Jesus was the Lamb of God who bore the sins of the world; also the sins that now vex you he bore. And that God *will* keep on forgiving is assured us by the fifth petition. Remember, that it is God the Father himself who, through his Son, has given us this petition. Why? Because he saw his children needed it. He saw that the children would be so harried and suffer so, because of their sins, their adherent faults and frailties, that they could not exist spiritually, unless they from time to time could come back to the Father's arms, confess their sins, pray for forgiveness, and receive the comfort of forgiveness; and just for this reason God gave us the fifth petition.

It must be evident, then, that God the Father expects to have just such children, children who need a daily forgiveness; and God is prepared to forgive and keep on forgiving until he succeeds in bringing his children home to the house of the Father, where no one needs forgiveness, because all sin has passed away.

The second point I wish to dwell on is: The longer you live in communion with your Savior, and the nearer you draw unto him who is the light eternal, the more clearly will this very light penetrate your entire inner man.

Moreover, this is a serious matter. For one consequence of this is that you will get an ever increasing insight into your sins. And here I do not merely think of your present, daily sins, of which I have just spoken. Of course, your increasing consciousness also of these sins and your distress because of them are surely also results of this light which has been shed in you. But something else may cause you even greater pain.

After a person, during a time extending over 20, 30, or 40 years or more, has tried to live with and for his Savior, a nearly forgotten memory of some sin or other may turn up, something that one has done in the distant past, for instance against a father or mother now long departed from this life, or against one's own demised husband or wife, brother or sister. It need not necessarily have been a "gross" sin, but still something that at the time must have been felt as uncharitableness by the dear one — one has not thought of it before just now — something that must have caused father, mother, or whoever else it might have been, heartache and sorrow; and this also has come to mind just now.

Under such circumstances we can sympathize

with the student who said to Dr. Luther: My father is dead and buried long ago, but I would gladly disinter him, using my own fingernails if need be, could I but ask his forgiveness. Yes, one may in a way feel even more miserable than this student, because one must admit: Even though his sin were more "gross" than mine in kind, my sin is still worse than his, for I sinned after I had been converted, or at least after I thought I was converted. O, my friends, then one gets to know what heart distress is!

Such an effect this light from the Lord Jesus, that penetrates our inner man, may have as it shines into all the recesses of the heart and discloses everything.

But what great tribulations the discovery of old, not as yet acknowledged sins can bring to us only your own experience will teach.

For the first thought that comes to us in such a case is this: When I could sin like that without at once feeling distress of the soul because of it, I can not really have been awakened or converted. And when such a sin can have remained hidden within me, covered with the dust and mould of forgetfulness, all these years without my observing it, I have perhaps been spiritually blind all this time. All my piety

and fervency so far have been nothing but deceit, I have in a most abominable way deceived myself and others, because I have been regarded as an honest Christian by all my Christian friends. Is it only just now I have really been spiritually awakened, etc., etc.

And again: If all my Christianity so far has been deceit, my consciousness of sin, my prayers, my Christian endeavor nothing but hypocrisy — that it has been unconsciously so cannot excuse me, because it must have had its source in the deceitfulness of my spirit — how can I then believe that God now will forgive all this? Again I say: then one knows what distress of the soul means.

You, my dear young friends, beginners as you are in the school of the Lord, know but very little of this. And perhaps some one will say that it is unmerciful in me to speak to you of such tribulations. But I do it to warn you and — arm you. Let me add that these are not fictitious instances I have spoken of; they are taken right out of actual life.

4. A Few Words Especially to the Distressed.

If I might venture to hope that my words would reach home to the soul that is in dire distress because of the recollections of such an old sin, after years of forgetfulness; or if I might hope that some of you would remember my words and find them helpful in case you after the lapse of many years should find yourself in like distress, I would say:

1. Be grateful to God for the discovery he has helped you to. How can I thank God, you say, I am on the brink of despair? Yes, you certainly have cause to thank God. For here is an either — or: Either your Christianity so far has been honest, though frail, and then your discovery of an old sin denotes progress, a growth in consciousness of sin, a proof that you have more closely approached him who is the true light which enlightens all who draw near to him.

Or it is, as you have feared, that all your Christianity so far has been self-deceit; but then it is indeed good fortune to discover it before it is too late, while there still is time for conversion. Have you not then cause to thank God in either instance?

2. If you had had occasion to complain of your distress to Dr. Luther, I think he would have answered you something like this: "Have you, perhaps, of late prayed more fervently that God might pour out his Spirit upon you?"

If you felt constrained to answer in the affirmative, I think Luther in his quaint way would have said: "Yes, there we have it. Such a prayer you must never make use of if you wish to escape disagreeable discoveries like these. Because the more you receive of the gifts of the Spirit, the more acute your vision will be for discovering sins in your heart and your conversation, sins of distant and recent date; this cannot be otherwise."

3. No newly awakened or recently converted person all at once sees all the sins he has committed. His consciousness of sin will be increased and gradually become more complete as the light from Jesus, with whom he is now living, performs its work in his soul. This is the reason that he now sees sins in his former life which he has not been aware of before.

4. These sins also (the secret faults) were forgiven him when he confessed before the Lord the sins he was aware of and prayed for forgiveness with the honest intention of de-

sisting from all that which he had acknowledged as sin.

5. One need not necessarily take it for granted that his Christian life has been sheer hypocrisy, even though he years ago committed a sin which he has not regarded as a sin until just now. If the Spirit of God has succeeded in giving clearer light to the mind of one who really turns away from everything he really regards as sin, and feels that he would gladly do what he has acknowledged to be the will of God, such a one is no hypocrite.

6. Finally, in the very worst case: If it seems as though all bridges crumble, everything testifies against you, your sins cry out to heaven, you see nothing but perdition ahead, I would say to yau: Begin over again! God be praised, there is still time to do this! Hear what our Lord Jesus says of himself: "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19, 10). If it seems to you that:

"Sins rise above thee like mountains overhead
And fainting in darkness thou liest,
Each memory seems as heavy as lead
Yet lightning plays in the highest."

Transl. K. S.

Yet your condition can not be *worse than "lost."* And Jesus is come to save the "lost." If all that you have attempted in the past has been but self-deception, come to Jesus now, he will "in no wise cast thee out." Save you, that is what he will do, and carry you right into the arms of the Father.

And were you still to ask what guaranty you have that this means you, I would answer by putting a few questions to you:

1. In John 1, 29 we read that Jesus was the Lamb of God "who bare the sins of the *world";* did he not, then, bear your sins?

2. 1 Tim. 2, 6 tells us that Christ Jesus gave himself "a ransom for all." Are not you one of *these all?*

3. What answer did the robber on the cross get when he prayed for mercy?

What does Jesus say of the publican who prayed: God be merciful to me, a sinner!?

And what kind of a reception did the prodigal son get when he arose and went to his father?

Do you not see, dear soul, that they were well received and well cared for, these who went to God with their sin and distress, ages before you ever thought of doing so? They

prayed: Lord, think of me in mercy! God be gracious unto me! Father, I have sinned against thee, forgive me my sin!

They were well received. Let this fact appeal to your heart.

Now you pray: Our Father, forgive us our trespasses! God, be merciful to me, forgive my sin! It is the very same prayer the others used. And God is the same — yesterday and to-day, yea in eternity. Can he then treat you otherwise than these others?

Reflect on this, distressed brother or sister, and you shall yet sing: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name!" (Psalm 103, 1).

5. We — Us — Our.

We cannot close our remarks without ascertaining what the little words *"we"* — *"us"* might have to remind us of.

We all feel sorry when two small urchins, who together have done some mischief, try to outdo each other in saying: "It was his fault." We look for that much honesty in the two small sinners that each of them should include himself and say: We — I and he — were the ones that

did it. And we just expect to hear such an expression as this from them: "Don't be angry with us! We beg pardon for what we did!" Well — God expects to hear the same thing from us.

We are shocked when we hear Adam, after the fall, throwing the blame on his loved one in order to shield himself. We feel it is cowardly in him. He does not say: We have sinned, but: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Just as surely as we have been associated with others in sinning, just so we must go to God together in confession and prayer. Let this be the first thing the words "we" — "us" in the fifth petition remind us of.

And furthermore: The prophet Daniel is commended by the angel of the Lord for being the "greatly" beloved man of the Lord. And we know how he even at the heathen court in Babylon remained faithful to the God of Israel, and kept his path clean. But note his confession and prayer, Dan. 9, 4–19:

"*We* have sinned . . . *we* have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts . . . O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face."

I confessed my sins and the sins of Israel,

my people, he says. And the Lord heard his prayer.

Friends, let the fifth petition teach us to do likewise!

If you pray for mercy for a brother or a sister that has sinned, always try to find out what share you may have had in bringing about his or her misfortune. Examine yourself before the face of the Lord, and perhaps the result will be that you place yourself beside the erring one before the throne of mercy, with a confession and prayer like this: Our Father, *we* have sinned, forgive *us* our trespasses!

And again: You pray for mercy on our people and our country, on the parishes of our land, and the many churches; you give thanks to God that the light of the gospel shines among us; you deplore that there is still so much darkness, so many tares among the wheat, so many frailties even among them that ought to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Again I say: Examine yourself before the face of God so that you may find the sins and shortcomings *in your life* which have contributed toward making conditions in our land just what they are, find *your* part of the blame for their being no better than they are.

Then, indeed, you may have cause to confess with Daniel: *"We* have sinned . . . *we* have departed from thy precepts. . . . O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face." And you will feel the necessity for praying: Our Father, forgive *us our* trespasses!

Of course, there are certain hours in the life of every Christian — and there must be — when he is wholly alone with God; I with my sin, God with the grace of salvation; and with this heart and mind are then so occupied that there is time and room for nothing else. But just as surely as you accept the fullness of grace that God gives you in such moments, your heart will expand in fervent love and mercy, so that you feel the distress of the brethren as your own, and the sins of the brethren as your sins.

6. As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us.

a. *Much forgiveness — much love.*

"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven — she loved much." Such were the words of our Savior concerning yon sinful woman in the house of Simon. And in these words he has vividly portrayed the inner life of every one who rightly prays the fifth petition.

Much forgiveness — much love, these are the two essentials in the portrait. Let the Spirit of the Lord show you that you need much forgiveness, teach you to pray for and believe in much forgiveness, and you will grow rich in love — to God and your neighbor. This is the right way. In this manner God saves from the horror and judgment of sin, he pardons and forgives; and in this way he also saves from the power of sin, he gives the pardoned one power to love much, because much is forgiven him. In this way the damage which the fall has caused is remedied. In this way the image of God is restored in us, as we learn to love. For God is love, and hence his image in us must be love, and, mark you, a love of the same kind as the love of Christ Jesus, for he is the exact image of God's person. (Hebr. 1. 3.)

And when our Savior has given us this supplement to the fifth petition: "As we forgive those who trespass against us," we do well in observing how he himself treated his "debtors," those who trespassed against him.

The most impressive expression of this sentiment will always to me be the Savior's first word on the cross. There he hangs, nailed by his hands and feet, suffering the most excruciating agony and torture of soul and body.

And as he beholds the swarming throng that had cried: crucify! and sees the distinguished and powerful ones, who have hardened their own hearts and beguiled the concourse of people to clamor as they did, he prays: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" So much does Jesus love those who had caused him injury, the most atrocious injury which has ever been perpetrated on earth; thus Christ forgives trespasses; he prays the Father in Heaven for mercy upon them even while he is giving his life for them.

> Whoe'er knew love so high and grand!
> So long, so broad, so deep, who can
> Conceive of, or proclaim it?
>
> Transl. K. S.

My soul, be still right here, and adore. See the *gift* of God — and your *task!*

God's gift is, that he forgives your sin and takes you into his arms as his pardoned child. But not only this; the gift of God is also that he will restore his image in you just as it shines forth in the life of Jesus, he will give you the strength to love even as Jesus loved.

And your task, my soul, must then be to accept and make use of the gift, thoroughly to turn to account what has thus been tendered

you. This is done when in accordance with the example of Jesus you endeavor to "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5, 44).

If you receive an evil word, give a good, a friendly word instead of it. If you feel that a sprout of bitterness is about to take root in your heart toward some one who has hurt you either in your reputation and good name or in some other way, include this very person in your prayers to God; pray for blessings and all good things upon the one who has offended you. In word and deed show him brotherly love, and the sting of bitterness will depart. O, my friends, practise this! It pays surprisingly well. For by such actions your own love increases. This is the way in which we must walk in order to be enriched with the love that Jesus loved with.

Jesus knew how necessary it is to us, when we have received God's gift of love, to practise love, and therefore he gave us this supplement to the fifth petition as a daily reminder. How good of him!

Necessary for us to practise love? Why, it is a life necessity.

To partake of the most savory dishes does not benefit us unless the food is transformed into strength; a hand or foot weakens and withers unless it is used or exercised; and any talent or faculty whatsoever which remains unused is lost. Just so here, also.

If we feel that we need much forgiveness from God, if we pray for and receive much forgiveness, we have then and there received the faculty of loving much. But if we do not put this faculty to use we lose it. The one that does not apply himself to the task of loving as Jesus did loses the power of loving.

One need not go so far as that servant of the king who assaulted his fellow servant and tried to choke him and cast him into prison in order to experience the penalty of his unforgiving disposition. That servant lost everything, "his Lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors." It may turn out sadly enough, even though we do not act like this unmerciful servant. For Jesus closes the parable with the following fearful words: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. 18, 35). So dangerous it is not to forgive our "debtors."

One loses everything by not practising forgiving love, loses the forgiveness obtained, ceases to be a child of God, the peace of heart departs and also the faculty of loving as Jesus loved, forgiving as he forgave. All is lost. Nothing remains except pain and an uneasy conscience here on earth and eternal despair in the hereafter.

b. *An especially dangerous point.*

Note the words: *"From your hearts"* forgive every one his brother. This implies much more than to leave our neighbor alone or do no harm to him. One that does no harm to his offender, nor wishes any evil to him, speaks no wounding word to him or of him, in short, totally disregards his neighbor, would be adjudged guilty according to this standard. And one who does not willingly extend his hand in reconciliation when the offender repents and begs pardon will self-evidently also be guilty. But even though I gave my hand in reconciliation and spoke words of forgiveness, I am still guilty if there in the innermost recesses of my heart remained a sting of bitterness, *and I let it remain there.* Right here, my friends, we are at an especially dangerous point. For our heart

is to the last degree deceitful, so that we readily imagine that everything is in perfect order as to our forgiving when the exterior forms are observed, while there yet at the bottom of our heart remains a secret aversion that we will not acknowledge as sin, that we will not even try to overcome, and against which we do not implore God for help.

Here it is necessary for us earnestly to examine ourselves, search our hearts with "torch and lantern," as it were. Perhaps we may then discover that some certain disagreeable case which we had thought adjusted long ago, was far from closed, because in the secret chambers of our heart a small grudge against the offender remained hidden.

It may have remained there unnoticed, forgotten for a long time, because there always were so many other things to occupy our interests and our minds. But the grudge was there, nevertheless, and would steal forth whenever we think of the one who offended us. Have we then *from our heart* forgiven our brother? No, certainly not. Forgetfulness is not identical with forgiveness.

What are we to do in this case? In the first place: Out into the open, into daylight with it

all! Give the matter the name it really deserves without any excuses, call the grudge grudge, and the sin sin. Confess it before God as sin and ask forgiveness for it.

In the second place: Tear the sting out, root and branch, like some poisonous weed. It must not be permitted to grow even ever so furtively. In other words, arise in combat and prayer against this special sin. Honest combat, honest prayer at the foot of the cross of Christ usually is very helpful. For:

> When we our Jesus' heart may view
> So rich in love, so good and true,
> As for his enemies he prayed,
> Though they to laugh were there arrayed;
> Then in our soul is born the fire
> Of love toward foes that ne'er doth tire,
> Then shall our Savior's kindly mind
> Implanted in our hearts we find.
>
> Transl. K. S.

Do not, then, lose courage! Persevere in combat and prayer! And you shall conquer through Him who loved us.

VII.

And Lead Us Not into Temptation.

1. Honest, Child-like Mind.

"I beg your pardon — I won't do it again!" This was the language of our hearts whenever we as children had done something amiss, to such an extent the language of our hearts that it seems to me we even said so before having been taught to.

In the honest, child-like mind these two things, begging pardon for faults committed and the honest intention of not doing it again are inseparable; we all feel it so. This discloses the intimate connection between the fifth and the sixth petition.

An honest, child-like mind our Savior has presupposed when he joined these two petitions: "Our Father, forgive us our trespasses, and lead us not into temptation"; an honest, child-like mind that says: "Forgive me, I'll not do it again!" But because I now know — better than the little child did — that my strength will not

suffice, I pray: "Father, help me, strengthen me, so I may not do it again!"

Yes, an honest, child-like mind, that is what is necessary. Do we have it?

Are we perfectly honest when we pray the sixth petition? Do we really pray to be delivered from sin itself and not merely from its guilt and penalty?

That God would blot out the guilt, take away the punishment, that is, grant us forgiveness of sins, this our soul thirsts for, when we are awakened so as to know our sin, and feel the judgment and unrest in our hearts, thirsts as he thirsts for water who languishes in a desert. But is there also such languish in our soul to get power from God to overcome sin and purge our hearts and lives of it?

And do we make full use of the power God gives for resistance so that we say: "No, I will not!" when we feel sinful desires in our nature, or when wicked companions entice us? This question we must put to ourselves..

And if we are really awakened and honest in this self-examination we will not escape humiliation.

When we ask ourselves if we with our entire heart desire to be delivered from sins of all

kinds, and if we put forth our best endeavors in becoming holy, pure, and good in our entire life, there is perhaps none of us who can answer that in this respect there is nothing more to be desired.

And the sting in our self-accusation will always be: "It is my own fault that I am not farther advanced. I have not striven as I ought to against sin and in doing the will of God, I have not accepted and made use of all the strength God gave me. This is the reason for my weakness in the hour of temptation, this is the reason I have so sinned and neglected so much.

And all this our Savior has thought of. He has foreseen that the children of the heavenly Father throughout their entire lives would labor under the weight of the sins still adhering to them, and that as they needed the fifth petition and the Father's assurance of daily forgiveness in their sorrow over the things of the past, so also they needed daily to carry all their cares and anxieties for the perils of the future to the Father in heaven, and to seek the defense that the strong arm of the Father reaches out, while we pray: Our Father, lead us not into temptation!

Therefore we say: Glory and praise be to God that we also have this petition! We could never do without it.

2. Temptation — To Tempt — To be Tempted — What Is It?

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust" (James 1, 14). The devil tempted our first parents, and he tempted Jesus. Gen. 3, 1 ff.; Matt. 4, 1 ff.

Every influence from within or without which in any way incites to what is wrong and wicked is a temptation. Also every influence by which we may be led to neglect doing good.

We are also familiar with the expression: God did tempt Abraham (Gen. 22, 1), that is, he put him to a test.

And of Israel it is repeatedly said that they tempted the Lord (Psalms 78, 18, 31, 95, 9, 106, 14), that is, they tried God's patience and righteousness, or, to be more exact, challenged his righteousness and wore out his patience — or at least tried to do so.

We shall especially confine ourselves to temptations in the sense of the word mentioned in the first place, and here we find a wide field, rather, many different fields worth considering.

We shall try to obtain some insight into part of this only. But in the first place we must dwell somewhat on the well-known words in the epistle of St. James (1, 13):

3. "God Tempts No One."

It is self-evident that no incentive to what is evil can proceed from God. This kind of temptation can only have its source in the devil, the world, and our own flesh. But God has created us with the faculty of *choice* and has caused us to live under conditions that necessitate a *choice* between good and evil. This holds true throughout our entire life. And this must be, because we are created in the image of God, and to find our bliss in choosing that which is good, in loving the will of God and performing it.

There is always a danger in being obliged to choose, the danger of loss, because of making a poor choice.

And yet we do not pray to be spared from the choice — this is not the intent of the sixth petition. For this would mean nothing short of praying that we might remain infants our whole life; infants are not permitted to choose, father

and mother choose for them. But as the child grows it must learn obedience, at first instinctively, then voluntarily to do the will of father and mother. Every good and sensible father and mother make a point of inculcating such obedience in their children, because they know that it is in this school of obedience the child is *developed, grows, and ripens* for making the choice between good and evil, when the time comes for them to do this independently of father and mother.

Here we have most aptly illustrated the procedure of God the Father with his children on earth. He places us in a position to make our choice, and often places us face to face with situations which require self-denial in choosing that which is good and discarding that which is evil. He intends that the children shall be *developed, grow, and ripen* toward attaining the goal which is represented by the final homecoming to the father-house, where they never more shall tremble at the possible loss because of a single sinful lust.

The sincere sentiment of our hearts in praying this petition must, according to this, be: "Dear Father, I pray: (1) that thou graciously wouldst spare me from trials and situations in

which thou seest that I would suffer injury! And I pray: (2) that thou wouldst keep me awake, and give me strength to withstand the evil impulses of the devil, the world, and my own flesh, whenever thou seest fit so to lead me that it becomes necessary for me to choose between good and evil!"

And I feel free to ask both these things, because I know (1) that the dear Father in heaven knows me better than I know myself, and he knows better than I what I can and what I cannot bear, and — because I know (2) that he has love, power, and wisdom enough to give me all the help I need.

4. Special Temptations of the Different Ages.

The child's first temptation is usually the temptation to disobey father and mother.

And but too often, alas, it is father and mother that set the trap for the child. We think especially of parents who continually bid and forbid their children all manner of things which they do not even think of making the child live up to.. Of such parents we must say that they not only tempt their child to disobedience, but *teach* them disobedience outright.

Then we have the older brothers and sisters or others, who "just for fun" tease the little child; because they find a horrid delight in seeing the child angry, who "fool" the child by lying to it, just "for a joke," they say, and feel tickled over the child's gullibility, make fun of it because it was foolish enough to believe what was said for fun, etc.

O, that they might see what irredeemable damage they do!

Then again we have the temptations from bad companions; on the street, at school, in the playgrounds, in the woods and the fields, when nasty language is used, nasty things are done, and the child's natural tendency to imitation is brought out..

Later on, during the years of transition from childhood to manhood and womanhood, come the special temptations of this age, in regard to which I take the liberty of referring to my book "Youth and Christianity."

We are, for instance, familiar with the case of a young man who has grown to be both bigger and stronger than his father, who, may be, has received a better education, and who therefore is tempted to look down on his father and forget filial respect.

And we know how the budding feeling of self-assertion, and the thirst for liberty and independence may tempt a young man to emancipate himself from the laws of both God and man, most likely beginning with the fourth commandment.

We are further mindful of how the young man's inordinate fear of being the butt of his comrades' gibes may induce him to humor them, however much his better self protests, — and we forget not the young girls' temptation to vanity, finery, and foolishness.

Finally we are aware of the dangers of youth during the period of courtship, the temptation to be guided by the passions alone, and to go just according to whim and fancy in the choice of a life companion, without due regard for God's word and precept..

Next we have the temptations of man and wife to sin against the commandment of love, temptations to think evil of each other or to wound one another in word and deed, and to neglect the respect, courtesy, friendliness, goodness, and patience they owe each other, temptations to neglect their first and most important duty as father and mother, the duty of bringing up their children in such a manner that they

may "remain in Christ, even as they have by baptism been grafted into him."

And at last the special temptations of the aged and lonesome ones. Aye, more's the pity, the old folks are often being sinned against. When they are unable to do anything, are "useless," as the term has it, because the powers of mind and body are on the wane, they are often pushed aside, and may even get to hear that they are in the way. Conditions may be such as to make them constantly feel that they are a burden to their children and their surroundings. Then these old folks are tempted to bitterness of mind, yes, even tempted to complain both against God and man. They not only suffer from without, but are suffering from a very dangerous inner condition if such temptations prevail with them. For this bitterness of disposition is apt to become permanent with them, and the peace of heart, the charitableness, gentleness, and patience which are the most beautiful ornaments of old age, are lost..

5. The Special Temptations of the Rich and the Poor.

The poor may be tempted to think: God is very likely not as good as we were taught to believe when we were children. For if God were really good, he would not be aware of our distress without helping us. God cannot be a just and righteous God, either, when he permits others, who have never worked and slaved like we have, to "fare sumptuously every day," while we are facing starvation; if God can behold such conditions without doing something toward establishing a more equitable division of the good things of life, he cannot be just. In this way the poor who still believe in a God are tempted to think evil of him and become embittered against him. And he that gives in to this temptation has but a short span left until he says in his heart, there is no God, or he is at least tempted to think so, or to persuade himself to believe that there is no God. But if there is no God, neither is there a future life nor responsibility nor judgment. And if one has arrived at such a conclusion, then the door is opened for this temptation: When life offers nothing but want and destitution, distress and

despair, why not end it right now, then it is all over with? Behold to what such a chain of temptations may lead — even to suicide! And, alas, they are not few that have followed this line of thought out to the bitter end!

O, my friends, how much depends upon resisting from the beginning! The initial thoughts do not appear so very dangerous to the tempted one. God is, perhaps — not — such a good God, etc. It reminds us of the words of the serpent to Eve: "Yea, hath God said . . .?" Not as good a God, perhaps, as we were taught in childhood. Were we to notice even the most furtive whisper of such thoughts, we should at once pray: Our Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation! The real truth is that God is so infinitely much more good than we have ever had a notion of, as much better than our conception, as heaven is higher than earth.

But the temptations of poverty may also follow along another line; the poor may be tempted to envy those who are prosperous. If one succumbs to this temptation, envy breeds all manner of evil thoughts, as: he is not a good person, has no charity, no mercy, is not as bountiful as he ought to be, and if he professes religion it is likely only hypocrisy, etc.

And here it also holds true that if at first you have succumbed to this temptation, you are steadily being led further on in the same direction.

One who has given way to the temptation of envy, will soon be tempted to bitterness against all that have more of this world's goods than himself, bitterness against all persons and things. One is then easily led into the belief that it is not wrong for one who is poor to steal from another who is rich; that what is termed property rights is nothing but rank injustice, — all have the same right to the good things in life, etc., and that the richest people are most unjust when they refuse to divide equally with those who have nothing. Finally such reasoning prevails, and one steals — without any qualms of conscience. Only one step more, and the slogan becomes: "We want to help the capitalists to a better understanding. We will bring about a fair division of property ourselves — yes, even forcibly, if we must — if they do not submit to it voluntarily."

Thus the subversion of existing social conditions is aimed at, and in accomplishing this all means are considered fair, dishonesty, and stratagem, yes, even murder and robbery.

I here again wish to point to the terrible consequences of giving way to the first small temptation. The first one in this case was envy. It seems so insignificant, for envy may dwell in the heart without being seen or heard by any one — without even being noticed by oneself. But, mark to what it leads! Therefore, when the minutest approach toward such sentiment is felt in the secrecies of the heart, let us again pray: "Our Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation!" And then let us at once take up the cudgel against the serpent and his poison! By the power of the grace of God let us tear the poisonous weed out by the roots!

Envy is yellow, says an old adage. Should we still feel tempted to regard envy as an insignificant fault, a comparatively harmless feeling, let us look at it a little more closely by comparing it with its twin sister, *malice*. And this *twin sister* is certainly *black enough*. Just think of it, if some one is unfortunate I delight in it (fie!), and the more unfortunate he (or she) is, the better I feel (fie, fie!)! But now it is certainly apparent that this delight in the misfortune of others flows from the same source as envy — or the dissatisfaction at the good fortune of others.

Are we not then justified in saying: Tear out the poisonous sting by the roots, cast it out!

I think we are now agreed that the heart in which envy and malice are permitted to grow presents an odious sight, and that envy itself is a horrid sin.

I once heard a poor man say — as one who had been very successful and had made much money was mentioned: "I am glad there is some one who *has something,* there are plenty of those who *have little.*" Was not this nicely put? Should not we try to say the same thing? Yea, even more: let us try to make our hearts *feel* joy in the success of our neighbor, *feel* truly happy over his good fortune, when he is more successful than we, and this not only when a dear friend or a relative is concerned, but even if it be a competitor. Is it possible to attain such a disposition of heart? Yes, by the help of God's mercy it is possible.

But the temptations of poverty may be dangerous enough even when they do not directly lead to despair, agnosticism, theft, murder, and robbery. The cares for the necessities of life may — like all other sorrows — be the means of driving a soul to God, to be sure. But how often does not exactly the opposite happen?

All thoughts, the mind and the senses, become so taken up with questions like these: What shall we eat, what shall we drink? How can the small competence I now have and my small income suffice for so many, etc.? When this is the first thought in the morning, the last one at night, and has occupied the mind throughout the day, no room remains in such a soul for a simple, child-like Our Father, no place there for confidence in the heavenly Father, — no room for Jesus.

The rich may be tempted to idolatrous love of his riches, so that, like the rich youth of yore, he prefers riches to Jesus on the day of choice. He may place such confidence in riches that he is tempted to say to himself: "Take thine ease," you have stores enough for many years, inexhaustible supplies! He may also be tempted "to make the belly his god," as the apostle puts it, and so say to himself, "eat, drink, and be merry" — now simply *live,* and "fare every day sumptuously"!

If any of you, dear young friends, to whom I speak to-day, should ever come into riches — or at least get what you call a competence, then do not forget what we are now agreed on, that such easy economical circumstances bring cer-

tain special dangers and temptations with them. O, that I might be able to tell you some good and useful word that might be of help to you in such a case! It would afford me much pleasure.

As the first temptation you would be subjected to, I will mention the love of god Mammon and the reposing of such confidence in him that your economical condition would practically satisfy you, and that but little would remain for which to pray God, and hence no reason be found for humble gratitude toward God. The giver and gratitude toward him would soon both be forgotten. The temptation may seem innocent enough: — it is so "nice and proper" to be satisfied with what one has, not to worry, not to lust after anything. But, mark you, the temptation is doubly dangerous just because it seems innocent. Therefore I feel constrained to say to all who face this danger: For God's sake, in spite of all, remain what you were before you became rich, remain the poor, undeserving sinner, who daily sought access to the throne of grace through the blood of Christ! Keep on doing what you used to do, praying the Father in heaven from day to day also for the bread that satisfies hunger, as well as for

the rest of the things necessary to gladden your earthly existence, and give thanks to God for all things in the name of Christ Jesus.

Next to the temptation just spoken of lurks another, fully as dangerous, *idolatrous covetousness.* Covetousness originates and thrives by possession according to the old adage: "much wants more." He who has has $1,000 in the bank gets an overpowering desire to have $2,000, and if he has $100,000 he worries to get $200,000, and so on infinitely. Mark you, it is not that you are careful of what you have and try to put by a little something for a rainy day, that I reprove; quite the contrary. But the danger is that thought and mind become so fully wrapped up in this, and the heart so wholly given to this desire, that no room is left for Jesus, no time for the word of God and prayer, no occasion for earnest self-examination or sorrow for the daily sins — in short, no room for Jesus. We see that such a soul must be lost, even though his outward life is blameless, yes, even virtuous, though he be charitably disposed toward the poor and needy, and give his portion to missionary purposes and other religious causes. Yes, even if such an one talks very piously, privately and publicly testifies to others

of the way of life, and all this correctly and, as it seems, earnestly in every respect, as long as his heart is so full of the desire for the things of this world that there is no room for Jesus, that soul is lost in spite of all his outward uprightness, virtue, and piety.

Again I should like to cry out loudly as far as my voice might reach: For God's sake, be on your guard here! Let the Spirit of God ever anew help you so to curb this desire for riches, that though you may feel tempted, yet the desire for riches in Christ, for comfort, strength, love, and power from him may be the overpowering desire of your soul; then there shall be room for Jesus.

That he, to whom the desire for riches has become the one grand passion of life, also may be tempted to make use of dishonest methods in acquiring wealth, is but too well known. Likewise that the insatiable thirst for possessing as much as possible very often has tempted a covetous man to such stinginess that he begrudges himself even the necessaries of life and hardens his heart against lending a helping hand to his needy neighbor.

6. Faintheartedness and Arrogance.

I see before me a gentle, quiet youth who is afraid of his sin, afraid of death, afraid of God. But to God he fain would come asking his forgiveness. Fain would he hear the friendly answer, "Thy sins are forgiven," and be accepted as the Father's dear child. But nothing comes of it all, for a voice in his inmost heart always whispers: That would be too bold in you, too early for you; you still feel too little sorrow for your sins; you are not penitent enough, not humble enough. No, wait awhile before you believe in anything so great, — that God should accept you as his child the way you are now, etc.

Rest assured it is the enemy of our salvation, the tempter from the beginning, that whispers thus. And if you were to give way to this temptation, you would only become entirely blunted in mind, so that the sorrow for sin and the desire for peace, would gradually decrease until you at last would persuade yourself that this state of torpidity and dullness is the correct way to be, and all else but useless whims and fancies of the visionary.

Do not, therefore, listen to him who whispers: "It is too bold, too soon for you to be-

lieve, wait a bit!" Turn away from him, my friend! Go straight to Jesus!

It is true that you do not repent of sin as much as sin should be repented of; we are all of us far short of doing this. But go straight to Jesus with this complaint of yours, for who else could possibly help you? Go to Jesus and take along everything that distresses, oppresses, and pains you, and hear his promise: "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," which means that he accepts you, as frail as you are, in order to help you with all the help you need. He receives you and says: "Your sins are forgiven unto you, my peace I give you!" For this is what he always says to those who come to him. But then you are also truly a child of God. You must understand that whomsoever Jesus accepts, the Father will not turn away; for we recall the words of Jesus, "the Father and I are one." It was the Father's disposition toward lost children that Jesus revealed in his conduct toward publicans and sinners, and the disposition and attitude of the Father he likewise revealed in the parable of the prodigal son.

Again I see before me a youth, and not exactly of the quiet, shrinking kind, for now

he is happy, O so happy, that he feels like crying out for joy. He has just felt free to accept and enclose in his heart and mind the sweet assurance of Jesus: "I do not turn you away, I receive you, your sin is forgiven." O, then it is no wonder he feels happy. All we who sincerely believe on Jesus, who have received so much from him, and who have accepted him as our Savior ought to feel much happier than we usually do. It is but right that such a youth should feel happy — and but right that he feels so completely unworthy of such grace, happiness, and honor; but just so he will feel as long as the Suirit of God preserves him in true humility.

But again the tempter comes and whispers secret thoughts: "What a godly soul you are, rejoicing in God as you do! how beautifully you pray and sing! how edifying you speak," etc. And just as the one who has a pretty face may be tempted to "fall in love" with his own image and from vanity spend too much time before his mirror, just so the temptation works out in this case. The tempter would flatter the child of God so as to lead him into vain self-adulation, tc become so satisfied with his own happy lot that seemingly little or nothing remains to pray

to God for, and thus humble gratitude is forgotten.

But there is something else that is not forgotten, as sure as the tempter has his way with such a frank and happy Christian; to compare himself with others similarly situated and discover a superiority in himself over both this one and that one, and then selfishly rejoice in his own advantages, whether real or imaginary.

The tempter prefers to smuggle such comparisons and discoveries into the secret recesses of the heart without the tempted person being fully conscious of harboring anything so base within him. And should you have a suspicion that something of a doubtful character is hidden within, the tempter takes care that you would rather not own up to it, not admit to ing "as mean as all that." But the enemy has the "game a-going." If he has succeeded, to begin with, in beguiling a soul into excusing, glossing over, or extenuating his sin, then the next step is close at hand: to instill the hardihood to defend his sin outright, not openly and before men, far from it; for he gives them the impression that he is the most humble soul of all. But over and against his own conscience

he has the desperate courage to defend his selfish pleasure in himself and his own piety.

And out from this self-satisfaction, arrogance grows like a weed in a fertile field; the arrogance that criticises and passes judgment right and left, gives the verdict that what *I* feel, think, and mean in things great and small, that — and only that — is true Christianity, and that something is wrong with all who think otherwise, who have a different opinion from mine. This begets partisan feeling, and strife between brethren; the devil rejoices, and the world scoffs and says: Just look how the Christians bite one another! That such arrogance, according to the old saying that "pride goeth before a fall," often also brings about a fall even into gross carnal sins, is too well known to deserve special comment.

Truly we must all feel the necessity of being on guard against the archfiend, that he may not instill into our souls the selfish pleasure in ourselves which begets arrogance and pride. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" was the answer of our Savior to the voice of the tempter. Let it be our answer also whenever we mark his insidious whisperings!

That we are happy in our fortunate position

as the children of God, are grateful to him for it, and at the same time feel unworthy of such abundant grace, feel the need of daily asking forgiveness for the sins that still contaminate our hearts and lives, that is, all worked in us by the Spirit of God. But if we notice our joy assuming even only the semblance of self-satisfaction, deadening our consciousness of sin and our need of daily asking for and receiving full forgiveness of sins, then it is time to cry, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" for then is the enemy of our soul's salvation walking about seeking to devour us.

7. Emotional Christianity and the Christianity of Works.

The tempter tries to persuade the beginner that true Christianity consists in emotions and feelings, feelings of joy and peace and satisfaction, or alternating feelings of joy and sorrow, peace and unrest. He would have us resting quietly and going to sleep completely in the security of such emotional Christianity, without our moving hand or foot to do the will of God or try to purge our hearts of old and new sins.

The one, however, who earnestly tries to *do*

the will of God as far as he understands it, him the tempter persuades so to lose himself in outward activities, such as engaging in missionary work, visiting the sick, doing slum and social betterment work, etc., that he neglects the principal thing, the daily renewal of his own faith and love, and the daily struggle with his Old Adam. With such a person there is apt to be too little honest self-examination, and hence too little familiarity with the secret passages of his own heart as far as feelings, desires, and wishes are concerned, and quite often too little self-criticism also of his outward life in word and deed.

Then it may happen that such a zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard gradually becomes unaccustomed to seek, as a poor sinner, the comfort of forgiveness and peace at the throne of grace.

For if consciousness of sin is not constantly deepened by honest self-examination and the discipline of the Spirit, conscience is deadened and the living desire of daily receiving the gift of pardon from sin gradually dwindles away. If you do not daily drink of the fountains of life, you grow inwardly torpid, though your outward life may be good and praiseworthy in

every respect. That your outward life is in perfect order, that you work and strive for objects of Christian endeavor, that the fiend permits, and gladly, if he can only make this very work an easy pillow for your soul to rest on. We are here reminded of the old saying: "A silken cord or a hempen is one and the same thing to the enemy, if he can but twine them into a noose to hang a Christian by."

Again I say, watch and pray: "Our Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation! Guard and protect us against the deceit of the devil, the world, and our own flesh!"

8. Tribulation — Affliction.

a. *Doubts of the truth of the word of God.*

An old teacher relates the following incident: "It is now more than forty years ago, but the experience was so deeply burnt into my young soul that it still comes vividly before me. I was twenty years old and was working with all my might to pass the final examinations from the Normal School, where I had been a student for nearly two years. My home was a Christian one. The religious instruction I received, during my preparation for confirmation,

and not less at the teachers' seminary, had made a deep impression on me. During all these years I had been steadily drawn toward God, and it had never occurred to me to doubt the truth of what I read in my Bible and Catechism. Then all of a sudden the doubts came: What if God were but a fancied personality? Can Christ really be what the second article of our confession says he is? Is there really an existence, a life after death? etc. Perhaps all these beliefs are but the products of human invention? I did not *want* to doubt, but like a sudden squall they came upon me time and time again; it lasted for several weeks, and I felt very unhappy. My first thought was to go to our teacher of religion, who was also our pastor, complain of my distress and seek help from him. But I was so bashful, and thought it would be entirely too bad to let him or any one else know that I harbored such wicked thoughts. Then I went into the woods, where I felt secure that no one saw or heard me, and cried and prayed to God to take these doubts away from me. And this helped me to believe again what I had been taught in childhood, just the same as heretofore, yes, these truths became even dearer to me than they had been. I had wres-

tled with God in prayer for these truths, having come near losing them, and I now felt that I could never afford to be without them.

Later on in life I have, of course, now and then felt some doubts, but never as strongly as at that time. And I have not so far found a better means of overcoming doubts than to bring them to God and ask him to take them away; it has helped me until this very day." So far the old teacher's reminiscence.

Now, why have I told you this? Not to throw doubt into your heart, surely. God grant that you may be spared pain and distress of this kind! But I know that the evil tempter who threw the doubts into the soul of the old teacher in his youth, still lives, and still goes about "seeking whom he may devour." And I think he especially persecutes those youths who feel attracted to God. Why especially the young and those who feel attracted to God? Why, simply because he knows that if they follow when drawn toward God, they will become faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus, they will then be enabled to influence others, friends and companions, in the same direction, and throughout an entire life exert an influence on many others to come to the Savior they have them-

selves learned to love; and if they should enter upon a teacher's career they will influence hundreds of children, and so on.

He that could throw doubt like some sudden squall into the heart of that gentle youth forty years ago, has now many more ways and means to further his schemes than at that time. Now, when we have papers that openly tell people that God is but a product of fancy; when we have a Biblical criticism that imagines it can subvert even the most fundamental truths of Christianity, a theology teaching that Jesus was a man, pure and simple — or even that he never lived, as some German authorities say, a natural science which claims that the world has originated by itself and is governed by eternal laws of nature — without a God, a literature that represents an immoral and licentious life as a life of beauty, and suicide as a "death of beauty."

Now, it seems to me beyond sober expectation that the archenemy, whose only object is to do what is evil, should let so many excellent opportunities pass without making use of them for robbing our youth of its most precious jewel — its child-faith. And it is safe to assume that not many of you will escape his attacks. The

enemy's mode of procedure may be different in the different cases. In some instances he will throw the doubts directly into the soul as in the case of the young man I spoke of. Others he sort of tries to enter into negotiations with. This method is well known ever since the day of the fall of man: "Yea, hath God said?" Or: "Is such a thing reasonable?" "Is it possible?" "Think for yourself," etc. Anon he seeks to persuade a person to ponder on incomprehensible problems, as for instance, the infiniteness of space and time, the origin of life, the origin of evil, and first and last on the divinity of Christ and whether he was God and man in one person, etc. And when one is tired of pondering, thoroughly tired, so that everything swims before the mind and you know neither way out nor way in, the opportune time has arrived for the tempter to whisper to the irresolute soul: "Now you can see for yourself that Bible faith and Christianity are "beyond power," as the leaders of thought have long since declared. Be a little reasonable, emancipate yourself from Christianity; then you are free," etc.

Dear friends, let us meet these attacks with the words of the Savior: "Get thee behind me,

Satan!" — "Our Father, lead us not into temptation!"

And let us follow the example John the Baptist has given to all who are tempted to doubt the truth of Christianity. John sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying: "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" (Luke 7, 19). John went straight to Jesus with his affliction, his doubts, and his distress. Let us do likewise. And let us listen to the answer the Savior gave John: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached" (Luke 7, 22).

That is, "pay attention to what happens, John, and you will find fulfilled all the signs of the coming of the Messiah predicted by the prophet Isaiah" (Isa. 35, 5. 6—61, 1 ff.). When this greeting came to John, I seem to behold him take down the "scroll of the book," and once more read the 35th and 61st chapter of Isaiah, and then, like the men of Sichar, exclaim: "Verily, this is the Savior of the world, — he is the Messiah that God promised to send his people, because what is wrought by him corresponds to God's promises of old."

Thus John was helped. And I think that later, when he was about to place his head under the executioner's axe, he said in his heart: ""Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have beheld the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, that also taketh away *my* sin, I have seen Messiah, the Savior of the world, *my* Savior."

"Yes, John might be helped in this way, but what of me?" sighs some afflicted soul; "I that feel tempted to doubt of everything, even the incident just related, both what is said of John and all the wonders performed by Jesus — is there help for me?" Answer: "Yes, God be praised, there is help for you, just as surely as there was for John the Baptist, *if you only wish to be helped.*"

To you also comes the exhortation of Jesus: Behold what wonders he works! In the days of yore the people singly and collectively could come forward and testify: I was blind, but he restored my sight; I was leprous, but he healed me; and I was poor, restless, and miserable, but the gospel I have heard from him has made me rich in comfort, peace, joy, and hope. And were you to ask those who really believe in

Jesus to-day what experiences they have had with him, they will now as in bygone centuries one after another give the same answer: Jesus, and he alone, heals the wounded conscience and gives comfort and peace. He gives strength to conquer in the hour of temptation, strength to bear the many sore trials of life, strength to bear humiliation, persecution, if need be, without becoming embittered and despairing. And he gives me courage to look forward with hopeful heart in spite of dark clouds in the horizon, hope for myself and all that are dear to me, hope for the progress of the kingdom of God all over the earth. He takes away from me the horrors of death and fills my soul with glorious anticipation of eternal life. Jesus, and he alone, satisfies the most profound longing of my soul, he is just the Savior I need.

Note furthermore what changes are wrought in family life through Jesus. In so many a home there was dissension, wrath, spitefulness, and evil words. But, "when Jesus enters meek and lowly, to fill the home with sweetest peace" — and this, thank God, happens now and then among us even in our times — what changes are wrought in that same home! Aye, "then light and calm within shall reign, and hearts

divided love again." Thus in the home, which is society in miniature.

And, in the life of nations, what happens "when Jesus enters land and nation, and moves the people with his love, when yielding to his kind persuasion, our hearts his truth and blessings prove"? Aye, "then shall our life on earth be blest, the peace of God on us shall rest." We see the literal fulfilment of this in the past and the present, wherever the Christian mission has entered a formerly heathen land. We see how just laws and social regulations with mutual love and peace replace enmity, bloodthirstiness, slavery, and tyranny.

And when in addition to this we find, that by far the larger number of the greatest and best men, poets, artists, scientists and statesmen have been religious men — that the very greatest have always bowed down before God and given him the glory — yes, that "the greatest," the epochmakers in the different fields of human achievement, have either straightforwardly confessed their faith, or at least expressed their profound respect for religion — (see L. Dahle, "Religion and the great men of humanity") — then it seems to me that we are just as well armed as John the Baptist was to repudiate the

kind of attacks on our faith of which we now have spoken.

b. *Doubts of individual truth and honesty before God.*

Honest, upright Christians, who for years have lived in communion with their Savior may be subject to the kind of afflictions we have in mind just now. Why specially these? Because it is a law of life that the nearer we come to Jesus," the true light which lighteth every man," the better we become aware of our own condition, the more acute our vision becomes in discovering both old and new sins in our heart and life. And the more of wakefulness and earnest endeavor the Spirit of God leads us to, endeavor for truth and honesty in our inmost heart toward God, honesty of heart in great and small things, — the more do we experience how true is this word of God: "The heart is deceitful above all things."

That this deepening of our self-knowledge and consciousness of sin is a growth of our inner life and progress, and is a gain to us, we all understand when we *speak* of the matter. But this is more difficult to understand while we are passing through the actual experience of self-examination. For it is painful to pass

through this experience, very painful. And when the fiend see that the Christian begins to tire and weaken under the strain, he makes haste to instill doubts and anxieties into the soul, so as to rob it of its boldness, faith, and peace — aye, to argue away his Christianity outright.

"Your conversion was not exactly regular," then becomes his slogan. "Your faith must be a dead faith when it bears no better fruits than you can show forth; your prayer is not what it ought to be. You cannot have been regenerated, you cannot possess the true life in God, when your heart is in the condition that it is, when there is no more love and holiness, no more of ardent desire and zeal than you show for furthering the Lord's great cause: namely, that his name may be sanctified, his kingdom come, and his will be done in your immediate environment and all over the earth. But what is then the godliness you have endeavored to maintain for years but hypocrisy, sham, and humbug within and without? Have a little sense for once, give up the whole business, then you are at least an honest man or woman, and that is always better than the fraud you are now perpetrating. Or, think the matter out by yourself, keep aloof from 'the friends' and their Bible hours, prayer

meetings, and all that, for you must see that you are out of place in the 'communion of saints.' "

Just this last may be the purport of the tempter's promptings. And any honest Christian who sees his own wretchedness may well be tempted to agree with and follow such counsel. O, how the poor soul writhes, while the heart feels as though pierced by fiery darts!

In such hours of anxiety and vexation the soul often asks: Which is the work of the Spirit of God and which that of the prince of darkness in all this? The answer is:

1. That you see your sin, and understand that the heart is deceitful above all things, as the Lord testifies by the prophet Jeremiah, is surely the work of the Spirit of God. And that you in the midst of your sorrow and distrust in yourself turn to God and pray: "Search me, O God, and know my heart . . . and see if there be any wicked way in me," is also the work of the Holy Ghost. That you reproach yourself because so much is lacking both in your inner and outer life, and therefore daily have need of praying: Our Father, forgive us our trespasses! God, be merciful to me, a sinner! this is again the work of the Holy Ghost.

In short: Every prompting *toward* God is the work of the Spirit of God.

2. And consequently every prompting *away* from God is of the evil one. No matter what the form of the temptation may be, as for instance: Your sin is too great to be forgiven, bid God farewell and die! Or: Give up the whole thing, then you have at least the advantage of being honest! Or: By all means do keep away from the godly and especially from the Lord's supper — whatever it is, it is all part of his plan to turn the afflicted soul *away* from God. The answer of such afflicted souls must therefore always be: Get thee behind me, Satan! Our Father, lead us not into temptation! Lord, defend, protect me, and give me a safe retreat with thee from the fiery arrows of the enemy!

Rev. Daniel Krummacher (German pastor, † 1837) once visited a believing Christian woman in sore distress as to her state of grace. No word of comfort could enter her heart. At last Rev. K. went over to the window and looked out. The desolate garden and the leafless trees of winter time confronted him. Suddenly he exclaimed: "You certainly have a lot of worthless trees in your garden." "Why so, pastor?" she asked. "They just stand there pointing their branches like broom-sticks up to

heaven; why don't you have them cut down?" "Why, how you do talk, pastor! The trees will surely, when the season is at hand, begin to bud, bloom, and bear fruit. I don't see why you call them worthless trees!"

"Do you really mean this?" Rev. K. now answered; "then why not apply this to your own spiritual condition? The Lord just now seems to let it be winter time within you, there is neither green foliage nor flowers and fruits in your heart, all is dry and barren within. Do you not believe that the Almighty Lord again will send spring time to you? Do you think the Lord will let his child freeze to death in the snow and chill of winter? That he certainly has never done to any child that longed for spring, for heat and life!"

The woman was silent awhile. Then she said: "You are right, pastor!" The affliction was past, and she was again brave and cheerful.

c. *The sin against the Holy Ghost.*

We all recollect the appalling words of our Savior: "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark 3, 29; comp. Matt. 12, 31; Luke 12, 10; Hebr. 6, 4. 5; 1 John 5, 16).

Of those who really have committed the sin here spoken of we hear very little. They do not come to their pastor or to you and me and complain of their trouble and seek comfort and help. They have made common cause with the devil himself, and hate and resist God, and the work of the Spirit, and they *want* to keep on doing so.

But we sometimes meet people who *think* they have committed this sin, and they worry and sigh: I am so afraid I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, the sin for which there is no forgiveness. And this surely is the climax of affliction.

The enemy of our souls is a past master at turning the Scripture passage above mentioned into a means of torturing souls in order to drive them that the Lord is working to save into blackest despair. And the fiend is especially active in the case of every one forced to admit that, though he was a Christian at one time, he has later on lived a life in sin and away from God. With persons of this kind the devil has fair prospects of success.

"There you see," whispers this soul-murderer, principally calling attention to the passage Hebr. 6, 4, "there it is in so many words":

It is impossible — impossible — for such as you to be renewed unto repentance. Here neither prayer, nor contrition, nor tears avail. What is impossible, is impossible. You may just as well first as last give up all hope."

And the unfortunate one stares with infinite horror on the terrible word "impossible," and he seems to hear ringing before his ears early and late, by day and night — tolling like funeral bells above the last vestige of hope — Impossible — impossible.

If we wish to be, by the grace of God, the means of bringing help to such an afflicted soul, let us note the following rules:

1. The words of our Savior about the sin which cannot be forgiven, and the words in the epistle to the Hebrews about the impossibility of "renewing unto repentance," are not spoken in order to frighten any one from coming to God. For "God will have all men to be saved and come" (1 Tim. 2, 4). What is intended by these passages is most earnestly to warn all that are about to turn away from God — or are tempted to do so — by pointing out to them where their way leads to.

2. When the sin cannot be forgiven it is not because God's saving grace and the "offering

for sin" — the death and blood of Christ — is insufficient, but because the sinner himself — against his own better knowledge — by resisting the work of the Spirit of God, has destroyed all receptability for God, and his saving work in his own soul.

3. The sorrow and pain of the afflicted one, his longing for God, forgiveness, and peace, are just so many proofs that the Spirit of God has not departed from him. The drawing toward God is the work of the Spirit of God in this case also, and is an earnest of that God is just about to perform his work of salvation in the distressed one.

Therefore we should confidently say to every downcast soul suffering this kind of tribulation: Just come to Jesus with your fear and trepidation, your distress and pain, come to Jesus with it all! And hear what he says: "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

One of the workers in our seamen's mission has told the following incident: "I knew a young sailor who attended our meetings; very reserved and somber-looking, he gave the impression of being on the brink of despair. At last, one evening, our assistant in the mission — an old and tried Christian — found an op-

portunity of speaking to him in private. Then he unburdened himself, saying that he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. He had been a Christian, but had lapsed. A couple of years ago he had been converted to God, believed the forgiveness of sins, and felt certain of being a child of God. But then the old sin had again gotten the best of him, and now he had read his sentence in the passage Hebr. 6, 4: "'it is impossible' that such as I 'can be renewed unto repentance,'" he said. When the lay assistant had heard all he had to say, the following dialogue ensued:

"Are you longing for the grace of God?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe that the blood of Christ cleanses of all sin?"

"Yes, but that does not mean *my* sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost."

"Yes, that means you; you have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. And the proof of this is just your sorrow for sin and your longing for grace, which is worked in you just to bring you back to God. Now, will you follow this drawing of God's Spirit and come?"

"Yes, if he only would accept me."

"Well," said the missionary, "I have a good

word for you from the Lord Jesus himself: "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out"; mark you, *in no wise* cast out, hence he will receive you. And when *he* receives you, it seems to me you are fairly well off."

This helped the young man. He was delivered from the snare and could praise God for salvation and peace.

9. Fall and Defeat.

Our first parents fell in the hour of temptation, and sin entered the world because of this fall. What a crushing defeat! What a loss — for them that first fell and for humankind! Like a blood poison sin entered into the entire generation, and out of one fall came many falls. What a sum total of falls, of sin! Murder, adultery, theft, robbery, gross idolatry, evil words, backbiting, cursing, blasphemy, lying — and the more secret sins of the heart, such as envy, maliciousness, wrath, hate, vengefulness, arrogance, selfishness, and many others. What a sum in the many generations, among all peoples, through thousands of years!

And with sin entered sorrow, sickness, want, and death. What a sum of sickness and pain,

of sorrow and tears, of fear and despair, does not, for instance, a single war cause! And yet this is but as a drop compared to that vast ocean of misery which expands before our eyes, when we contemplate all that has been suffered by generation after generation among all peoples throughout the thousands of years that have passed since the first fall!

Let this thought prompt a warning to us when some one in an hour of temptation would have us believe that "once is no custom." Just as the first fall was productive of many falls, so in the life of every individual, one sin is followed by others. And at the same time it holds true that a small sin — speaking according to human standards — is productive of a greater one. The correct understanding of this has been embodied in the saying: "Give the devil an inch and he will take an ell" — and the one of the thief, "who starts with a pin and ends with a silver bowl to put it in." And of the truth of this we have the most shocking proof in so many cases. For example:

The beginning was a flippant word, a questionable joke, the finish a life in vice and shame. Or: The beginning was the jovial youth's first small intoxication in the company of gay

friends; the finish was the life of a tramp, always on the move between the gutter and the drunkard's pen. Or: The beginning was an insignificant disagreement between man and wife; the finish a permanent state of domestic trouble, divorce, violence, murder, or suicide.

But why is this true, that one sin breeds another? Why does it come easier to him who has lied once to lie next time he is in trouble? And why does the thief who has stolen once go at it more boldly the next time he is tempted?

Because there is something within him that is damaged by his fall. The faculty, will, and power to resist sin is broken down. In other words, *the character is injured.* And this injury within is all the more aggravated the oftener one succumbs to the temptation. O, that this might always be apparent to our youth, and to us older folks also!

Let it warn us: Beware of the first step on the dangerous inclined plane where you see thousands and thousands of your fellow pilgrims glide and slide toward the abyss of perdition! Beware of the secret sins! Beware of the small sins! Beware of the first sin!

10. Victory and Re-establishment.

Christ was tempted, but he overcame the temptation (Matt. 4, 1–12; Mark 1, 12. 13; Luke 4, 1–13). He conquered in the wilderness and on the pinnacle of the temple and on the exceeding high mountain; and he conquered in all the other temptations we are told of, and in the many of which nothing is told. He repudiated every prompting to depart from the Father's will. With a serene brow he could challenge his evil environment and the entire world and ask: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And his question has remained unanswered unto this day, and this means much. Because we may rest assured of that there has been searched with light and lantern in order to find sin in him. All search has been in vain, and we rejoice in this. And still more joy does it give us that the Father in heaven has found no sin in him, and has proved it by raising him from the dead.

Therefore his victory is as complete as victory can be.

And when we think of the words of St. Paul: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one

(Christ Jesus) shall many be made righteous," it seems to me we have ample reason to sing songs of rejoicing every time we are reminded of "the obedience of this one."

What to us is so infinitely valuable and joyful in this is, that by his complete victory over every temptation to sin — and thereby over the tempter, over death as the wages of sin — and by his complete obedience to the Father even unto giving his life as the ransom for many (Matt. 20, 28), Christ Jesus has become *the Savior*. And a Savior that not only is capable of saving us from the abyss of death and perdition just as brands plucked from out of the fire, but the Savior that is powerful enough to raise up the fallen generation of Adam so that whosoever will — we also — becomes a conqueror by his power.

For it is just like this: Whenever you give yourself to him as your Savior and receive what he gives you, he implants in your heart the same obedient spirit we always find in him — the will of the Father was his meat — and at the same time he gives you as much as you need of the power, which he himself possessed in fullness, so that you can take your stand against the tempter and meet every temptation

with a firm and definite *no*. And he gives you strength to say as he did, yes, Father, yes from the bottom of my heart — to all that which you know is God's will concerning you.

And as succumbing to the small temptations leads to ever greater defeats, because the faculty of resisting is broken down by the fall, so will the faculty to conquer increase by every new victory. The pleasure in the will of God and the strength to do it is *built up* and *increased* by adding victory to victory. Therefore we also have that comforting word concerning those whose strength is in the Lord: They go from strength to strength (Psa. 84, 7). In order that our life in God may develop this beautiful growth — from strength to strength — *faithfulness* is required.

We must be faithful in *watchfulness,* so that we may know when we are tempted. An unwatchful Christian may both be tempted and fall without heeding it.

We must be faithful in *the use of the word of God,* so that we appropriate the chastising and humiliating word as well as the comforting and encouraging one — faithful so we let the light of the word penetrate our entire inner man into the remotest chambers of our hearts and clear up everything within us.

We must be faithful in *prayer,* so that our prayer is a true expression of the need we feel within us for the help of God — faithful so we really desire what we pray for, and trust that he, according to his promisses will grant us what we pray for, and we then *accept his help.*

We must be faithful in *our fight,* so that we with honesty of will and purpose make use of the strength that God gives, both to resist every impulse toward doing what God condemns, and in spite of selfishness do what we know God desires.

And finally we have a source of strength in the sacrament of the altar, a fountain from which every disciple of Jesus frequently must draw if he wishes to conquer, grow, and go forward from "strength to strength."

VIII.

But Deliver Us from Evil.

1. The Great Evil.

The great evil in human life, the basic and most profound cause of all our pain, sorrow, and misfortune, is this, that man gave in to — and gives in to — the temptation to sin.

And, if we have learned anything at all in the school God keeps for his children here on earth in order to educate, purify, and sanctify them, we have all of us had experiences that warrant us in saying: My sin is my great evil that I ever and always feel the need of seeking help against.

Therefore our prayer for deliverance from evil will always in the first instance mean this: Deliver, our Father, deliver us from our sins!

Now, as we have just prayed to be saved from the guilt and judgment of sin (the fifth petition), and to be saved from the power and

dominion of sin through temptation (the sixth petition), we will now finally entreat God for liberation from *sin itself,* from every contamination of and every contact with sin.

Sinlessness, can we pray for it? Yes, with this understanding: Dear Father, help your child — your frail child — to be ever more liberated from its yet adherent sins, more holy, pure, and good, and more like unto thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! And let this deliverance from evil continue all the days of my life, until I become entirely sinless and may dwell in the eternal home that my Savior has prepared for me where nothing profane or unclean shall enter in!

And just as surely as God by his Spirit has succeeded in making it the most ardent desire of our soul to be fully delivered from every contamination of sin and wholly cleansed of it by the power which is in Christ Jesus, this will be granted to us some time. The seventh petition will be answered just as surely as every other petition prayed with a sincere heart in the name of Jesus. Therefore this petition should be prayed not only in a sorrowful spirit, thinking of the evil — and evils — under which we and our fellow pilgrims suffer while we are yet

on the way, — but also with a joyful mind; for it will bring us rich and glorious comfort, directing our vision forward to the day of consummation, when we shall obtain the most blessed thing we can conceive of — a heart filled with the love of Christ — when we shall be like unto him — seeing him as he is (1 John 3, 2). Beautiful prospect! Glorious hope!

2. Other Evils.

May we not also pray for deliverance from bodily pain and purely temporal sorrows and evils?

Yes, most certainly. As the child goes to its father or mother with everything it has at heart, so shall we as the children of God go to our eternally good heavenly Father, and speak confidentially to him of everything we may have at heart. There is not a thing so insignificant in the affairs concerning our weal and woe — even the temporal — that God the Father does not like to hear when in child-like simplicity we bring it to him, seeking counsel and help. An earthly father may sometimes find it necessary to say: "No, my child, this matter you will have to arrange the best way you know how, it is

too trivial for me to bother with." But never has our Father in heaven answered any of his children like this, when in sincerity of spirit they came to him with their affairs, great or small.

True enough — if some one were to think that we had received the seventh petition in order that by constant use of it we could be assured of nothing but "days of comfort" in temporal respects, this would be a gross error. If we were to hear some one praying like this: Dear Father in heaven, give me all that I wish for, and spare me from that which I dislike! we would at once see that this was no appropriate prayer. It would also be contrary to the third petition.

Yes, if we heard some one pray like that, we would know it was wrong. But let us always keep a watchful eye on ourselves, on our own hearts, whenever we pray to be delivered from adversity, pain, and sorrow, for the heart is deceitful above all things. And it may easily happen that our prayer is fraught with selfish desire.

But, thanks be to God, he has nevertheless permitted us to pray unto him for temporal things, and that he would deliver us from the

evils of life. At the beginning of each day we may pray: Dear Father in heaven, protect us throughout this day, preserve our lives and health, our homes, and whatever other temporal things thou hast given us! Guard us against all misfortune, save us from sickness, sorrow, and want!

Yes, we not only may, but we *ought* to pray thus. Otherwise we are no better than they who do not pray to God for the bread they eat; they accept it without acknowledging it as a gift of God, without thanking God for it, and without having that blessing from it that God willingly would give them.

Still, let us never forget the lesson our catechism teaches, that when we pray for things that are not necessary unto salvation, we should always add: "Lord, if thou wilt." For God alone knows whether that which we pray for would really be of benefit to us.

3. Lord, if Thou Wilt!

Lord, if thou wilt — as thou wilt — not my will, but thine be done! This is a prayer which we constantly must keep repeating, and which we must ever better memorize. But whosoever

in perfect sincerity has tried to pray thus after misfortune had struck him, when the deep sorrow, sickness, or pain was resting heavily upon him, he knows that this prayer is a sharp thorn for the old Adam.

For instance, the sorrow felt when death has robbed us of the one we cared more for than for anything else on earth!

Or we may think of some serious or exceedingly painful disease, or an accident where life was not lost, but the body has been maimed, arm or leg lost — crippled for life — eyesight totally destroyed, and so on. O, how painfully difficult it may be for the suffering one, with sincere child-like confidence in the heavenly Father's wisdom and love, to say: Thy will be done, dear Father! And yet, this is the only way — the only way — to be delivered from evil.

Does the evil cease then? Does the maimed become whole or the blind seeing? Yes, this also, if God so wills it, that is, if he sees it is of benefit. Still, if this does not happen, if the cripple remains a cripple, the blind remains blind, etc., even though nothing is changed in outward circumstances, there is nevertheless deliverance from evil, beginning with the hour

when the suffering one has submitted his will, pleasure, and desire to God, and has snuggled into the heavenly Father's arms with all his sorrow and pain, praying: Thy will, not mine, be done!

And there is deliverance in this. For then adversity is no longer an *evil* that harms; it has become the means of leading us nearer to God. It has become a means of education in the hand of God, by which he helps his children to victory over selfishness and the unruly "self-will" or wilfulness, and helps them to an ever increasing knowledge of sin and debility and of the power of the riches of grace in Christ Jesus.

In this way the words of the apostle Paul are verified on all sincere Christians in the school of suffering: "All things work together for good to them that love God." Mark you: All things, hence also suffering and sorrow, and these perhaps not least, shall work together for good.

Just such a deliverance from evil is a granting of our prayer that we ought to appropriate even more than, for instance, the gift of healing by prayer.

We may perhaps meet some one saying: "If you are a true Christian you need never be sick;

just pray—unconditionally—that God will make you well, and believe that he will do so, and you will be well. Or get some one that has the gift of healing by prayer to pray for you, believe that he will succeed, and as you believe so will it be."

Without entering into a discussion of healing by prayer I will say: Let not this question afflict you. And above all else, do not think ill of God, even if he lets your disease protract, and think not that he is evilly disposed toward you!

If you are sick, try to thank God for this also. For you may rest assured that he holds health and sickness in the hollow of his strong hand, and has sent you sickness with the very best intentions. Pray him for grace not to frustrate his intention with yourself, so that you may reap the blessings that God in his love has destined you to obtain by means of the sickness sent you. Your gain may, for instance, be:

God wishes to draw your heart unto himself if you have been living distant from him previously. Or: God wants to take you apart from the strife and turmoil of life and in the tranquil hours thus gained promote a more rapid growth of your inner life, if you are already living the

life in his Son. He may have intended to increase the depth of your knowledge of self, make your consciousness of sin more profound, your humility more thorough, your patience more enduring, and at the same time reveal to you the glory and riches of his grace, give you greater faith, more perfect peace, and increased strength. And first and last he wishes by means of such sickness to equip you more completely than heretofore to conquer your wilfulness and selfishness, so that with perfect frankness and fervent acquiescence in God's will you can pray: Not my will, but thy will, be done! and you will be more like unto the Savior than heretofore.

4. To Thank God for Adversity.

Just a few words more about thanking God for adversity, sorrow, sickness, and pain. Ought we not to wait before expressing our gratitude, until all the difficulties are overcome, so that we can see and feel the blessed effects of having been helped out of them? No, and again no! You have, perhaps, heard the old saying: "To thank God for sorrow is balm for sorrow." No? Well, but this is more than hearsay; I assure you, it is true. We do not wait to apply

the healing balm until the wound is healed, quite the contrary. We take the medicine as soon as the disease is at hand — the sooner the better, — we make use of the ointment when the sore smarts most. So here also. Let this be the very first thing we say to God when the sufferings come: Thanks, dear Father, that thou hast sent this sorrow, sickness, disappointment, humiliation! I know thou wouldst only benefit me, and I thank thee!

"But I do not *feel* grateful while suffering," some one may say; "am I not, then, a hypocrite before God if I offer thanks?"

Answer: There may be some doubt about the gratitude readily expressed, because we feel it so thoroughly. Is not such gratitude — before God, who knows us so thoroughly — expressed something like this: Thanks, dear God, that thou hast humored me and done just what I wanted you to. But then even the most fervent gratitude has become unclean and contaminated by selfishness.

You are no hypocrite if you thank God in *faith* without feeling; thank him in the belief that God is a good and loving Father that wishes his child well just as surely when he leads it through adversity and imposes heavy

burdens, as when he sends it prosperity and the things in which it rejoices. It is my opinion that such thanksgiving in faith — without *feeling* grateful — or in spite of what we feel — is the purest kind of thanksgiving we can bring God while we are here on earth. And every one, who in child-like simplicity and resignation to the Father's will has tried to stammer forth such thanksgiving, has experienced that there is healing power in it.

A certain Christian young man of twenty or thereabouts was overtaken by a sorrow so great that it seemed to him he must collapse under the weight of it. But let him tell it himself: "When I felt I could not associate with men I sought the solitude of the forest in order to pray God for relief and comfort. But the wound in my bosom still bled and smarted as much as ever. Then one day the thought came to me: You had better try to thank God for this very sorrow. I acted on this. I again went into the forest and addressed myself to God in this manner: I thank you, dear Father in heaven, I thank you for the sorrow that now lies heavily upon me. I thank you for permitting me to believe that thou hast sent it to me for my own good! Grant in thy grace that thy

purpose may be attained! Amen. And it helped to such an extent that I was astonished. It felt like dropping pain-alleviating balm into a smarting sore. A feeling of sadness and bereavement at the thought of what I seemed to have lost I still retained for a time, but the sting of pain was gone and the heart became quiet."

Therefore I say: "To thank God for sorrow is balm against sorrow."

Well, we are not as surprised as this inexperienced youth at the blessed effect of the "healing balm." For we understand that such thanks as that just spoken of implies an unconditional surrender to the will of God, and we know that there is always healing and rest in this.

5. Once More "Our" — "Us."

We must also here dwell somewhat on the "our" and "us" that our Savior has placed in our mouths and hearts when he gave us the prayer Our Father.

We pray: Our Father, lead *us* not into temptation, but deliver *us* from evil! Who are these "us"? It is myself and those I live together with in my home, in my congregation, in my country, and beyond as far as the sun shines.

Our Savior's love includes them all, and he will give his disciples the faculty of loving even as he loves. As he in his infinite love desires, aye longs to save all from sin, death, and the power of the devil, and "draw the world unto his breast, and turn its woe to joy and rest," so will he give you and me some of the same desire and longing. And if he but give us this we will feel the necessity of including in our prayer the many that are tempted and tortured by sin, those that sorrow and suffer, and all that otherwise are in distress. It becomes a heartfelt want in us to carry them and ourselves on the arms of prayer unto the heart of the Father, saying: *Our* Father, deliver *us,* save *us* from evil!

But now we do well to examine ourselves and ask: How do we pray this petition? How far are we advanced? Has the word "us" become to our consciousness what our Savior intended it should, a distinct expression of the same disposition of heart that we notice in him when he was moved with compassion on the people, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd? (Matt. 9, 36). This we must ascertain.

In the next place: What do we *do* for them

we pray for? If you and I have occasion to help the tempted and distressed one, but pass him by like the priest and the levite of old — or we have an opportunity to comfort some sorrowing one, relieve the pain of some sick one, help a helpless, clothe a naked one, etc., but do not do so, what then? Should we then only console ourselves with the fact that *we have prayed* for the suffering ones, prayed that God would deliver them from evil, and that he will then likely send *some one else* to bring actual help and relief? God bless you, friend! we all feel that this would be nothing short of fraudulent talk before God. By no means would we then resemble the Savior, for his disposition of heart toward the suffering ones was not *idle talk* of compassion; he loved in *deed* and *truth*.

Still one more question to conscience: St. Paul, as you know, brings home to the Jews that "rest in the law and make their boast of God" the following pertinent question: "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" (Rom. 2, 21).

Alas, we dare not deny that the blessed Our Father often is prayed in an unpardonably superficial way. And it may be that this superficiality also affects the words "our" and "us,"

and the errand they have to the praying one. When I imagine St. Paul standing before us now, in order to reprove this superficiality in us, I seem to hear this sting in his words: "Thou that prayest: Our Father, lead us not into temptation! temptest thou? Thou that prayest: Deliver us from evil! dost thou inflict evil?"

And we do well in taking these questions to heart.

Let each and every one of us think first and foremost of our conduct toward those we daily have about us. They may all in the course of the day have temptations enough even though you and I do not tempt them. That we therefore, in beginning the day, include them in our prayer, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, is certainly as it ought to be. But are we also fully clear on this point, that while we pray thus, we undertake the obligation, as far as it is in our power, of smoothening the way for the others? In order to do this it is necessary for us to practise friendliness, courtesy, meekness, peaceableness, patience — and charity in everything — in word and deed.

What blasphemous irony, what a carricature of the real thing, if I, for instance, by quick temper, pretentiousness, peevishness, or impa-

tience should tempt any of those I am living together with, to these same or similar sins, after having prayed also for them: lead us not — none of us — into temptation! Or if I use harsh, wrathful, and wounding words, that must cause them I have just prayed for the greatest heartache, and then pray: Deliver us — myself and them — from evil!

O, that our heavenly Father might keep us wide awake to all this, what a help this little word "us" would be for us also in the sixth and seventh petition! Let us take it as a constant reminder of *living,* not only *praying,* as becometh the children of God.

IX.

For Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory Forever and Ever. Amen.

1. Confidence and Trust.

By the first words of the Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven! our Savior has wished to kindle in our hearts a child-like confidence and trust in him to whom we pray, just the confidence a good child has in a kind father. He has wanted us to have an implicit trust in this, that he to whom we pray, from whom we seek help, really is *our Father;* and that he is a father whose goodness and love, power, and riches so vastly excel all the greatest and best we possibly can have a conception of as the heavens are higher than earth, and that such a father therefore is worthy of our unlimited confidence.

Such a confidence and trust we now find ex-

pressed in these closing words. The words are really a confession. But they are even more, they are at the same time a hymn of praise. And as a hymn of praise it must ring forth from the hearts that believe it: Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever! Amen — a hymn of praise from every heart that has learned to appreciate the Lord's prayer, and who prays it in perfect faith.

And it will exhort and admonish us more firmly to believe if we at every one of the seven petitions would keep vividly before us this grand confession, that his is the kingdom; — he to whom we pray is ruler of heaven and earth, and the King of all kings; his is the power, he does as he pleases in heaven, on earth, on the ocean, and in "the great deep"; and his is the glory forever and ever. Yes, in eternity. This word reminds us that this song of praise shall continue also when we have ceased to pray: "Hallowed be thy name!" "Deliver us from evil!" and all other prayers, because all our prayers have been fulfilled forever. Then shall the words: Our Father, thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever! Amen, in unspeakable joy ring out throughout

all the heavens from the throats of the ransomed multitude in the eternity of eternities. But if we expect to be along *there,* we must begin *here* to learn this song of praise, and we must practise steadily and learn it ever better.

Somewhat of confidence and trust in our Father in heaven we must have in our hearts if we in sincerity make use of these closing words of the Lord's prayer. And then we shall experience that our confidence and hope for fulfilment will be strengthened and grow by trying in true child-like simplicity to close our prayer with this confession and praise: Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever! Amen.

And now a word in self-examination. How is our confidence, our faith, and trust, our hope of fulfilment, when we pray Our Father? Must we not all "cast down our eyes" and feel humbled?

Though we have experienced the indescribable happiness of joyous trust and confidence while praying, yet we are very likely not strangers to the feelings of uneasiness, fear, and doubt. Possibly there has been painful anxiety either that we would not get the help we prayed for, or would not get it at the right time — dis-

trust, in short — and this toward the eternally faithful and truthful one.

Is it not too utterly sad that our hearts should be so filled with the poison of unbelief that we even mistrust our Father in heaven, as though he were not reliable? It is usually considered very wicked without cause to doubt the sincerity and reliability of men, as, for instance, to mistrust a man's truthfulness when he has never lied to us. But to have doubt or mistrust in the case of our God, who has proved to us his eternal fatherly love by giving us his Son for a Savior, and who in him has adopted us as children for the Son's sake, to distrust him — is not this the basest of all base things? And yet, who must not here feel guilty? Are we not at all events obliged to admit that we have never believed *"greatly enough"* in our Father's power and goodness — never thought him great enough as far as ability and will are concerned, so that he could take care of his children and help them in all kinds of want, distress, and danger, granting them all help they need?

He has told us, however, as plainly as possible, in styling himself Father, that he is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, and its Lord and King, that *he has a heart,* and will

take interest in us poor worms, and that he will do this with a disposition of heart so fervent and tender, so rich and faithful, that even the best we may witness of fathers' and mothers' love on earth — and, indeed, this is not so very little — is but a shadow of reality compared to the love of our Father in heaven.

And has he not by the words: "who art in heaven" also told us, yea, as plainly as possible, that to him belongs the kingdom, and the power, and the glory? And does not St. Paul say: "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever! Amen."

Then our Father is truly the Lord and King who rules all things and does what he pleases both in the realm of nature and the realm of the spirit. Therefore we should confidently sing: "Thy way is ever open, thou dost on naught depend, thine act is only blessing, thy path light without end." Hymnary 284, 4.

Lord, open our eyes that we may see! Yes, we ought to feel the need of praying thus, when we think of the wonderful prospects that open up before us in the contemplation of it all.

And if he might but open our eyes to see plainly *who he is and what he is,* he to whom we pray, do you for a moment think it would

be possible for us to pray the Our Father with cold hearts and careless minds? Would prayer then seem an obligatory task which we do only because we have to? Or could we then pray with the secret doubt: "I wonder if it will help?" Or would we be able to harbor the sigh of anguish: "O, if it would only help?" Never, my friends, never!

O, that the Lord might open our eyes to see it all! Would we not then hasten to him in unbounded confidence with all the matters we have at heart, — just like a happy flock of children race with one another to get into the arms of father or mother and lisp their sweet "Good morning"?

2. Prayer Heard — Fulfilment.

It is now surely plain to us that both the opening and closing words of the Lord's Prayer offer valid reasons for believing that our prayer is heard, reasons so convincing that it leaves no room in our hearts for doubts of any kind. But what shall we say, when we comprehend the true and full significance of the further fact, that God himself has in the most direct words exhorted us to pray to him, and that he has just as directly and plainly said that he would

grant our prayer. Among the many promises to this effect we will quote only the following ones: In the time of the old covenant the Lord says: "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm 50, 15). "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you, and ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29, 12. 13).

And the Savior says: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7, 7).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16, 23 and 15. 16).

Call upon me — pray to me, our God and our Savior says to us.

Now we all know that if a rich property owner has told his poor neighbor, "Just come over to my place and tell me, in case something should turn up that you cannot handle," the poor man will feel that he is very fortunately situated, knowing that these words were spoken by a man entirely trustworthy. He would feel confident and safe even though the outlook were serious.

We ought, indeed, to feel very confident, even though we had only the word of God inviting us to call on him in all our want and need. For such words absolutely imply that he will help, and there never was guile in his mouth.

But we have not only the plain, naked exhortation to pray; he has also added his direct promises: "I will deliver thee," "I will hearken unto thee," "Ye shall find me," "It shall be given you," "Ye shall find," "It shall be opened unto you."

This sounds as though he were at great pains to make it plain to us in all possible ways, and say it as emphatically as can be that he will hear us, because he has it so much at heart to make us believe it.

Is it then justifiable in us to neglect to pray, or to pray doubtingly?

Let us give special attention to the Savior's extraordinarily strong assurance: "Verily, verily I say unto you: Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

To pray in the name of Jesus — what is it? what does it mean? It cannot be simply to close the prayer with the words: "In the name of Jesus, Amen."

The newspapers sometimes mention a certain use of a person's name which is criminal. A swindler presents a note at the bank with the signatures of two good men as security. Everything looks to be in perfect order; but there is a sad drawback to it; the man has made use of the names of the securities without their knowledge and consent; and if the felony is discovered he gets a prison sentence instead of money.

What was this man's crime? It was that he acted as he did without having made an agreement with the men whose names he made use of.

But then it is also a dangerous felony if some one tries to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus without having met Jesus personally, and without having made any agreement or arrangement with him, Mark this: it is *to his disciples* Jesus gives the permission to pray in his name.

And the necessary "agreement" in this case, if *we* wish legally to use his name as security, is that we have surrendered to the Lord Jesus as sinners, freed from punishment by his sufferings, that we have accepted him as our Savior, and that we as his disciples are willing to learn from him.

If there is such an agreement between him

and yourself, my friend, then he gives you the carte blanche, unlimited credit, with his Father in saying: "Verily, verily I say unto *thee,* whatsoever *thou* askest the Father in my name, he shall give *thee.*

If we had sent an application to a bank for a loan with Rothschild's or Morgan's signature as security, we would never worry while waiting for the return of our messenger, thinking: I wonder if I will get the money? We would feel as certain of getting it as though we already had the cash in hand.

But, my dear friends, here is more than Rothschild or Morgan. Here is Christ Jesus, who bids us go to the Father *in his name;* he is our surety with the Father. Therefore every sincere prayer in the name of Jesus is like a solidly safe document sent to the strongest of all banks, the Lord's own bank, where it is absolutely certain of being honored.

And even as you expect that the messenger you have sent to the bank should bring back the money with him, and hold yourself in readiness to receive it and make use of it, so must we expect to have our prayer fulfilled and be ready to receive and *make use* of it when fulfilment is at hand.

If, for instance, you have prayed for increased humility and patience in order better to glorify your Lord and Savior by your life, you must be ready to practise these virtues in your daily life, and you shall experience that the fulfilment is at hand. How should you otherwise experience it? So if your humility and patience are put to even severer tests than heretofore, do not wonder at it, nor deplore it; this is also part of the fulfilment. How could you become more humble without humiliation? And how gain more patience without trials of patience?

Or if you have prayed for more fervent love, and greater willingness to contribute to all good causes, begin at once to practice more love and kindness in and outside of your home, begin to give more liberally to the sufferers and the needy, increase your contributions to missionary purposes, etc., and you shall once more experience that the fulfilment of your prayer is at hand.

3. Amen.

Amen is a Hebrew word, meaning "verily," hence an affirmation word, nearly like an oath.

Christ often used the word amen — verily, verily I say unto you; — it is the strongest affirmation we hear from him.

St. Paul says that all God's promises in Christ are yea and amen, that is: as all gracious promises, from the very first one of the seed of the woman which should crush the serpent's head, signified Christ, so in Christ they are all corroborated, realized, and fulfilled.

In Rev. 3, 14 Christ himself is called Amen, the faithful and true witness, because he is — as he himself states — *the truth.*

As you all well know, the word amen often occurs in our public worship. After the reading of the confession of faith from the altar, the congregation sings amen as an expression of their concurrence in the confession. And after the triple benediction we sing amen to denote that we accept the benediction with joy and thanks. At baptisms amen is used many times — after the baptism proper, after the prayers, the benedictory wish, the peace-greeting, and the glorification.

It is to the congregation God has given the gift of the sacrament of the baptism in order that God's congregation should have the joy and happiness of having their children accepted into communion with God, and grafted into Christ. And the amen used at baptism is an expression of the concurrence of the congregation, and its

corroboration of what is being done. Most appropriate it would be, then, that the entire congregation witnessed the act of baptism, and that all as with one voice joined in the amen used, but according to prevalent custom among us, the deacon speak on behalf of the congregation.

Our confession of faith we close, as you know, with the word amen, and here the word means: What I have now confessed "is most certainly true," as Luther says.

When we close our prayer with amen, the sense of it is: Verily, that will come to pass which I have prayed for. It is therefore not the same thing as though I would say: O, that it might come to pass! but a forceful declaration that we believe the promise of fulfilment the Lord has given.

Then let us not use this little word thoughtlessly, not in a common, habitual way, not with straying minds. But every time we close our prayer and say amen, let it be kept vividly before us that it has this meaning: Verily, this will come to pass, that is: The Father in heaven has heard my prayer, and he will do just what I have asked him to, and give me what I have asked him for.

"How, then, shall a poor sinner like myself

be able to speak amen as it ought to be spoken?" I seem to hear some weak soul sigh. O, you are not the only one who feels that way; there are many more of us familiar with such distressful thoughts. Let us agree, however, to let the Spirit of God constantly speak to our hearts of the meaning of the following:

1. That the Lord God in heaven will be our Father and we shall be his children;

2. That he has himself encouraged us to pray to him; and

3. That he has promised to hear and fulfil our prayer.

And then God will let his Spirit so firmly establish in our hearts, that it will remain there, this word of our Lord Jesus: "Verily, verily I say unto you, that whatsoever ye pray the Father for in my name, he shall give it you." This means that all things we need we are to charge up to his account with his and our Father, and with the strongest affirmative word his mouth ever uttered he has assured us that we shall get them. Then it will likely also come to pass that even we, frail and "of little faith," as we may feel, shall in the school of the Spirit be trained in the art of saying our amen in child-like faith. Yea, it shall be so, if we but *will it sincerely.*

That the supplication of faith must close with a frankly spoken amen we now fully understand. But what about this word after thanksgiving? When I, for instance, right after my meal say: Dear Father in heaven, I thank thee for this food, in Jesus' name, amen! what is then the meaning of the word amen?

In using the word in this connection I wish to say: "Thou art my Father, thou Almighty Creator of heaven and earth; thou givest me all that I need, and from thee, my Lord and King, I have received the food I have just eaten. And it is not because of any "merit or worthiness" in me that thou hast given me what I have received, but for Jesus' sake lettest thou thy goodness and mercy come upon me, amen; that is, verily it is so.

Let us then pray: *Our Father, who art in heaven, increase faith in us, yea in us increase faithfulness! Amen.*